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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN SOUL

BY THE

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TO MY DAUGHTERS

DOROTHY

and

CECILIA MARY STEVEN

in gratitude for all that they have been to me

Edinburgh, 1917

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE rolled up like a weaver my life: He has cut me off from the loom." That is the striking and pathetic figure of speech which the greatest writer of Jewish literature puts into the lips of a dying king to describe the life of man. Yet it is only one of many resemblances between the art of weaving and that of the Christian calling. When the weaver seats himself at his loom, the length and breadth of his web have been already fixed by the warp stretched out before him: the warp has determined the limits of his enterprise. That now he cannot change, yet by means of the many-coloured threads of the woof, he can so manipulate it as to produce a web of exquisite beauty and high value. He can change the unchangeable according to a pattern which is set before him, or which shines clearly within his mind.

So can a man adapt and master his surroundings however lowly, and his years though they may be few, to the fashioning of a soul after the pattern of Christ. That is the thought expressed in the title of this book. There are elements in every life which are unchangeable, and elements that are at a man's own disposal. Within limits he can weave his web of life according to his own conception; and the limits are the environment into which he is born, and from which he will never entirely escape. For all men, in a wide sense, the environment is the same. We look out at the window on a summer morning,

and see the fields or the streets of the slum courtyard flooded with sunshine. Whether the observer be the proprietor, a farmer or a ploughman, a working-man or his wife, or a beggar lodging only for the night, the sky is the same, so also is the sunshine; and there steals into the heart of most of them the feeling that it is a good thing to be alive. They all have something within them of Jaspar's heart when he answered Borrow: "Life is sweet, brother. There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

Sweet and gladsome things such as these, or others that fill the heavens and earth with misery, are among the surroundings in which we must work out our Christian life. We shall have to speak of many of them in their turn, but this we can say now, that neither the warp nor the woof is of great value by itself. They would be but bare threads, a tangle without beauty and wholly worthless for the business of life. Yet when woven together they may become the sails of a racing yacht, or the most delicate cambric, or the fine-twined linen of the High-priest's robe on which were hung the bells of gold.

There are two senses in which the figure of "the web of life" may be used—the larger one with which Carlyle, translating the poem of Goethe, has made us familiar, where God is represented as sitting at the roaring loom of life and weaving Nature as a manifestation of Himself. The narrower sense is the one dealt with in this volume, where each man of us is represented as weaving his own life. Yet when our webs are woven, "cut from the loom" and

handed in, they are found to be but threads in the vast undertaking of God. His was the warp, and He laid it on the loom for us; His, too, is the woof; and when we have accepted His Son, the pattern which we follow is also His.

The separate chapters of the present book are parts of the ordinary work which a Christian teacher and preacher prepared from time to time for his congregation; and they are now published in the hope that they may be helpful to a wider audience. They deal mainly with the mental aspect of our spiritual life, and not with theology strictly so called or with practical affairs—not with the doctrines of our faith or the exposition of Scripture, but with what takes place in a believer's mind when he comes into contact with the Divine. This method was familiar enough in former days, and has become familiar again. To a certain type of mind, it may still prove to be the opening up of a way into the world unseen. The writer would count it sufficient reward if his effort should encourage some of the younger men of his time to try a method which he has found both interesting to himself and helpful to others. The transcendent revelation of God, which has come to us through Jesus Christ, came through a human mind, was received, understood, and proclaimed by minds like our own, and must therefore be accessible to a mental interpretation. There is at least nothing irreverent in attempting to follow out the course which the Spirit of God takes within the shrine of the human mind.

The following chapters are not necessarily consecutive, yet, although they were originally independent studies, they follow the ordinary line of in-

telleet, emotion, and will. They are not, and were not intended to be, chapters in psychology. They are concerned wholly with the situation in which Christian men and women find themselves to-day, and differ from the ordinary methods only in making their approach from the mental side of the spiritual life. It need hardly be added that for that very reason they are written in the ordinary language of the people. That, however, has been no disadvantage, for, as Schopenhauer has said, the common people can follow and appreciate the best thinking of which we are capable if only we will speak in their vernacular.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the invaluable help which the writer has received from his friends, the Rev. J. Ironside Still, the Rev. T. L. Ritchie, the Rev. A. P. Davidson, and his own minister the Rev. J. Lorimer Munro.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN SOUL

CHAPTER I

Out of the Dim Past

NO words can adequately express what we feel of the mystery of this life we are living on earth. We are not thinking of it always, nor indeed often, and to very few of us is it in any sense a burden. But when we do think of it, we feel the mystery. Whence have we come? How happens it that we are just what we are, with this limited mind, these mastering feelings, this will sometimes so weak, sometimes so stubborn? We have words with which we seek to answer our children's questions, but which do not satisfy ourselves, and we all have some sort of creed with which we trade. But when we set ourselves to think the matter out, we are baffled. And scientific men after all their searchings confess themselves baffled too. What is life? They cannot say. What is consciousness? They know the fact of it as we all do, but cannot explain it, nor how it comes. As Professor Arthur Thomson, one of our leading biologists, says:—

“We do not know what life in principle is, but we may describe ‘living’ as action and reaction between organisms

and their environment. This is the fundamental relation—the dependence of living creatures on appropriate surroundings; and the primary illustrations of linkages must be found here. The living creatures are real, just in the same sense as the surroundings are real; but it is plain that we cannot abstract the living creatures from their surroundings. When we try to do this, they die—even in our thought of them, and our biology is only necrology. Huxley compared a living creature ‘to a whirlpool in a river; it is always changing, yet always apparently the same; matter and energy stream in and stream out; the whirlpool has an individuality and a certain unity, yet it is wholly dependent upon the surrounding currents.’ One may push the whirlpool metaphor too far, so as to give a false simplicity to the facts, for when *vital* whirlpools began to be, there also emerged what cannot be discerned in crystal or dewdrop—the will to live, a capacity of persistent experience, and the power of giving rise to other lives. To ignore this is to attempt a falsely simple natural history. But what Huxley’s metaphor of the whirlpool does vividly express is the dependence of living creatures on their surroundings. We cannot understand either the whirlpool or the trout apart from the stream.”

What we would fain understand, then, is the dependence of our Christian life on our surroundings, and the first fact we have to consider is our dependence on our bodies with their instincts and impulses. We must try to understand this “vital whirlpool” and the great stream of which it is a part; and in order to do so, we may begin by taking an incident from the life of a child. A gentleman stood at the window with an infant six months old in his arms. She had been tenderly cared for, like

other children of her class, had never heard an unpleasant word spoken, or seen an unkind action done, and at the moment she was entirely happy. Her father was talking to her, and pointing out the people to her as they passed. But from time to time the infant kept looking back at something on the mantelpiece. Thinking she was attracted by a vase of wallflower, he carried her to see it more closely. But on approaching it she burst into tears, sobbed and panted in terror, and with drawn face and throbbing heart she crouched down into his bosom, laid hold of him, clung to him, and pressed as if she would flee away. She was frightened beyond all doubt, and manifested all the usual symptoms of profound alarm. What frightened her? Why did she show *these* tokens of fear? Where and when did she learn them? If we answer they were inherited, what do we mean? Through how many generations must we pass before we come to the source of the terror and its symptoms? And down through these generations it has come as an instinct, we say, and emerges so needlessly in an infant who has nothing to be afraid of. An instinct, and one of the most familiar of them! A very old experience in the history of the early ages stands there recorded in some mysterious way in the very constitution of us all. How that has been done we cannot tell; nor can we tell how the human body has been moulded to become the delicate and powerful and subtle instrument we see it now to be. Forces have been playing upon it through thousands of years, apparently under the guidance of some thought or plan, until it emerges at last into the human nature of the present day. Out of that

dim past we bring with us instincts and impulses which were of the highest value then for the preservation and continuance of life, and which are of the highest value still. But we must learn to master them, subdue them, that they may become of value to us in our service of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not enemies of our souls but friends, if we will allow Him to take them into captivity. In them we have the spring of our activities, our warnings, and often our guidance in life. They have only to be yoked, like other forces of nature, to the car of human progress, and we shall find them willing servants of the Great Master.

Each stage in life has its own instincts, and therefore its own problem of how they may best be subdued. We have learned this, that each stage must be dealt with for its own sake, and developed as if it were an end in itself. It is, no doubt, preparatory to the succeeding stage; yet the best preparation is to make the most we can of each stage as it comes. The child should be a perfect *child*, not a little man, even in his religion. Men sometimes speak of the early years as the seedtime of life. They are, but they are also the harvest time of the early years. Each period is both seedtime and harvest, and childhood is *in itself* the seedtime of boyhood, as boyhood is of adolescence, and adolescence of manhood, and so on to old age. Each must live its own life under the power of Christ. The child thinks as a child, speaks as a child, behaves as a child; and that he should do so without reminders that he will yet be a man, is the best preparation he can make for manhood. Still, at every stage as it comes, there emerge

new forces, new instincts, and new capacities which are fitted to cope with them, and our wisdom is to employ and develop the new capacities for the guidance of the new instincts. The boy is not only a natural pagan, delighting in pranks, adventures, it may even be in adventures of crime, and in bloodshed; he is a natural Christian as well, with a high courage and a sense of fairplay and honour, and hero-worship. The adolescent, if he has not been marred, has noble aims, and fine ambitions; he has ideals and chivalry, which will lift him out of many temptations, preserve him from many a stain, and send him on, clean in heart and strong in purpose, to a worthy manhood. Therefore the form which Christianity will take at each stage ought to be fitted to the stage. Thus the teaching and training of a boy in religion is not that of a child, nor is the religion of the adolescent that of the boy.

Now, from this inheritance of a body we cannot escape. Into our keeping and for our use it has been put. We have no other we can use; it is not possible to change it for a better, or to flee from its narrow and unalterable limitations. Within this body *I* am set, with power and freedom to use it. And this is our dignity and transcendent honour, that we can use it for the glory of God. For the existence of this instrument, for its coarseness (if it be coarse), for its delicacy, its nature, its range, its intricacy, we are in no way responsible. We are responsible only for the use of it. And we *can* use it; of that we are all convinced. We are convinced of it, because we have used it in the past both for good and for ill.

A pungent writer of our time speaks of "the spec-

tre of heredity," and a spectre it has been to many. There are few sights more pathetic than that of young men or women who have become aware of a bad strain in their family, watching for evidences of it in their own actions, perhaps excusing their own conduct by it, and careless of their lives because they imagine that no care on their part will avail. There we have heredity stalking as a spectre, and people believing in it instead of believing in God. But biologists are now directing our attention to the power we have of influencing our environment. As Professor Arthur Thomson says, a *vital* whirlpool is endowed with a will to live and a capacity for persistent experience. In other words we can resist influences that are working on us or within us for evil, physical or moral, and we can maintain ourselves within the scope of influences that help us to realise what we believe to be our true end. This "laying" of the spectre of heredity, this exorcising of the false god "Circumstance," is the work of the Spirit. This is the victory that overcometh the world—whether it be heredity or environment—even our faith.

There are, however, other forms of environment than these. We have those social surroundings which go to determine our lives—the kind of home we were reared in, whether books were common there or alcohol; the friends that called, their conversation, the line of life they followed, the men or the actions that were praised by them. Far more important for the ultimate character of a man is the country he is born in, for this determines the language he will speak, which in its turn determines the books he will read, the public men he will hear, the thoughts and

ideals he will have set before him. Although there is a wide range of thought common to all Christian nations, it is not a matter of indifference in religion whether a man is a Briton, or a German, or a Frenchman, or a Russian. There are, as every one is aware, not only family prejudices but also national. Very early in life a man gets a bent or bias from his nationality which may be very dear to him. The soul is not "a detached existent," as Professor James remarks, not a living being sufficient for itself; it dwells within environments which act upon it, and on which it reacts. When we speak of heredity, we are pointing to that environment which has come to us through past generations, which is so near us that it is part of us, and from which we can only escape through some form of faith. The soul is surrounded by influences which tend to arrest its development and to destroy it, and these we at our peril must become acquainted with. St. Paul speaks of a warfare which we must carry on with this inherited nature; but this very inheritance is part of the material out of which we form our true life. The individual who cannot fit himself into his circumstances so as to make use of them for his higher life will be controlled by them and fall into decay.

But the conception of environment is seen to be still subtler as we reflect on life. Every deed we do, good or evil, makes the path smoother for the next deed like it. Writers have compared this fact to the forming of a rut or path in the brain, and the repetition of the action to the deepening of the rut, until at last it needs a miracle to turn the wheels of thought into another path. But serviceable as

this figure of speech may be by way of illustration, we must remember there is no rut in brain or thought. The first act was the result of a desire, which in its turn was the result of an image—a conception of some real or supposed good, and ultimately the result of a thought—the whole process being an expression of our inner self. But the doing of the deed once makes the whole sequence easier to conceive another time, and therefore more likely to happen. It gets linked with other thoughts, facts, memories, pleasures, or pains, and any one of twenty things will now bring it up before the mind, very likely to the hurrying of a man into action before he has had time to reflect. Or perhaps a man's actions in the past, his feelings, his old thoughts pass out of sight, and are lost to him. But they are not lost, nor have they lost influence upon him. They have only entered into that "region" of his mental life which is in our time described as the sub-conscious mind. This sub-conscious mind is, of course, his own, the work of his own thinking; and there, unperceived, it links itself to new thoughts that present themselves to him, welcoming them as right because they are akin to it, or repudiating them because they are alien. In this way we are all continually extending our environment, and (if we are not watchful) limiting our freedom.

But over and above all, yet at the same time within all, is that mysterious, all-powerful and all gracious Environment which we call God, who besets us behind and before, who understands our thought afar off, and from whose presence we cannot escape. He is everywhere, in everything, and in everyone.

He cannot be confined to any space, nor (save with one remarkable exception) can He be excluded from anything. He is said to dwell in heaven, but in the same sense He dwells on earth and in the mind of man; and because of this, our earth may become a heaven to one who trusts Him. We can make Him our sole environment, changing the world itself and man into His ministers; or we can exclude Him from our thoughts—(there is the one remarkable exception to His Omnipresence)—and seek our life's purpose in that which is beneath us. He is no more distant from the sinner than from the saint; the difference is, the saint by faith enjoys His presence, and is strengthened by it and purified. Wherever a soul thinks of Him, desires Him, and delights in His work and His will, *there* He is in the fulness of His wisdom and grace. While men may talk of some inner necessity or destiny, some inscrutable and irresistible power in life, the Christian by an act of faith rises out of it as a bird out of the fowler's net. They say that the generations pass like the waters of a river, changing as it changes with the rains and the other influences of earth, and that the lives of all of us are borne on its bosom to an issue in the future as dark as is its origin in the past. But to the Christian the inscrutable destiny is a Father's will, the power becomes His mercy, and all things are the manifestations of His presence.

CHAPTER II

The Influence of the Past

THERE is an element of regret in the passing away of anything that is good; to reflect on it as an experience that is finally closed is somehow to take its colour out. When Gibbon had finished his great history, in a summer-house in his garden at Lausanne, after laying down his pen, he took several turns in a covered walk of acacias.

“The air was temperate” [he writes in his autobiography], “the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my *History*, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.”

But that experience of a great writer has been felt by many a smaller man than he, even in the little incidents of life—in taking leave of a friend, or abandoning a home, or at the close of a year of pleasant work. How much more is it so at the thought of the passing away of youth, or the sudden ending of a promising life, or in reflecting that our life, even at the longest, is but short and comes to little.

That is a mood that does not generally help a man to live nobly, and is perhaps due to a false conception of what life means. Life does not pass away. What happens is this. A new light is thrown upon the past, be it a friendship, an event, or any experience. We see ourselves and all things in a new aspect; a revelation is made to us of something we had not seen or imagined while we moved therein. Our past has taken a new place in our life, has become a fact which will now endure as a permanent influence whether we are aware of it or not, will continue to bias more or less our judgments and our actions for life. Maeterlinck speaks of this fact in his own beautiful way:

“Our past stretches behind us in long perspective. It slumbers in the distance like a deserted city shrouded in mist. A few peaks mark its boundary, and soar predominantly into the air; a few important acts stand out like towers, some with the light still upon them, others half ruined, and slowly decaying beneath the weight of oblivion. The trees are bare, the walls crumble, and shadow slowly steals over all. Everything seems to be dead there and rigid, save only when memory, slowly decomposing, lights it for an instant with an illusory gleam.” Then the poet adds—and it is for this we have quoted the passage: “In reality it is alive; and, for many of us, endowed with a profounder, more ardent life than either present or future.”

We have only to deepen our reflection on the past to see that the present of every one of us is the sum of all our past. In ourselves we are little more than the gathering up of the many experiences

through which we have been led. It will perhaps be easier to grasp this vital truth if we turn for a moment to physical nature. The present state of the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, is the result of all the forces that have been brought to bear on them. Clearly they have had nothing to do with it themselves—they have no “selves” by which to do it. What they were made at first, along with what has come to them from without—that they are to-day, and nothing else. They are the sum total of all their past. If you would have anything in their nature changed, you must go back to the Creation, or get the Creator to interpose.

So is it with us. With a limitation of eternal importance, which we shall speak of presently, we are to-day the sum total of our past. The past has brought us where we are to-day, and for better or worse made us what we are. The new-born child is an heir of all the ages through which the human race has come. Through untold years its body has been fashioning, getting a little here and losing a little there, as the generations followed one another, gathering sensitiveness and capacity according as parents knew how to direct their life. In some measure the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, diseases and recoveries, failures and successes, sins, repentance, and the peace of forgiveness, of a long forgotten past were modifying the minds and brains of men, and preparing, however incalculably, for this new birth. And from the moment it drew its first breath, not an hour has sped which did not leave some trace upon its soul—lines which the eye of no observer could detect, and which no one could read in the face.

But there is a limitation to the statement that we are at every moment nothing but the sum of our inherited nature, together with our past experiences—a limitation of so momentous a character that we can say that we are at every moment our own masters. We are not the bond-slaves of our past, but masters of our destinies. At any moment we can change our course. It is true that the change we are able to make at any given moment may be a slight one, yet, if it be but a hair's breadth moment by moment, it will eventually bring us as far as East is distant from the West. The express train laden with a hundred lives, that comes thundering down the main line at sixty miles an hour, may be switched to the West by the hand of a man who has control of nothing more than a thin tongue of steel *at the points*. So a single act of attention—a thought of home, the memory of a promise, the cry of a child, a moment of prayer—may involve all the difference between eternal life and death.

Deeply important, then, as our past is, there is one thing more important, viz., what we purpose doing *at the present moment*. Every living soul is at every moment the pointsman of his own life, and can choose good or evil. At the “points” he is free until he has enslaved himself; yet an opening is left for him even in slavery. Circumstances, however adverse, do not compel a man to live basely in a land like ours, where there is abundant knowledge of the good life, and a hundred hands are stretched out to help any one who cares to attain it. There is no doubt a truth in General Booth's terrible words that in Britain tens of thousands of the population

are "not born but damned into the world"; and yet we may dare to say that not one of them made the best of the opportunities that came to him, and not one of them was so pinned down by his circumstances that he never learned a lesson from them, never improved in something, and never surprised his friends by doing a worthier or braver thing than they believed it was in him to do. Are we not all surprised to-day at the loyalty to their "pals" and their officers as well as at the extraordinary bravery of just some of those who were supposed to be damned into the world? The fact is that no self-conscious being is born without the promise and the potency of a good life. Some of them, if they try it, will find that there is also within them what will make the struggle fierce. But if they stand at the points watching, the struggle will be less fierce every day. The loyalty and bravery of these men on the battlefield were nurtured in their games and in their temptations, and still more at school and at work. They had read of brave things, and talked of them, and saw themselves in fancy doing them, long before the chance came. It is not only allurements to evil, but also calls to honour, that have a history. On the one side our past holds us in, on the other the memory of it rouses us to break away from its bondage and be free men.

We see from this that the excellences of human character have been woven out of the very defects of the past. For example, the finest wisdom of men has been learned in the bitterness of frequent blunders. We have all been the better for the mistakes we have made, and, although we are not wise,

we are wiser than we should have been without them. Life is constantly setting us problems of how to deal with our fellowmen. These problems are often bewildering enough, for the "lock" we have to open is the human heart, and we do not know how to find the key. A locksmith in such case will try first one thing and then another, each failure teaching its lesson, until the true key is found; that is his wisdom. Our wisdom is that rare skill which some men have acquired of getting at the heart. They *acquire* it. And it is acquired only after long experience and many blunders. What hideous and haunting blunders we have made! What pains and regrets we have caused ourselves and those we tried to help! There are men who will never forgive themselves their foolishness and blindness and blundering, in their homes and at their work. But what do these things matter if we have attained even a little of Christ's wisdom in dealing with men? And His wisdom surely was in always taking men at their best, always encouraging the weak and the struggling, overlooking the visible evils in men's character in order to reach the invisible good, or imputing good motives and intentions to those who as yet showed none of them. We sometimes see Him (do we not?) standing for a minute to straighten the broken reed; or, in the evening at home, stooping down to breathe gently upon the smoking flax until it showed a point of red, then fanning it with the breath of life into a flame. To acquire a little of that skill is worth all the pain we have passed through in our early failures. The spiritual life of some men may seem to be extinct, but at the worst it is smouldering dully under years

of sin; the spring of living water is choked beyond all recognition by many an earthly obstruction. But a kindly hand can remove any obstruction, and a loving heart sooner or later gets down to the love that never quite dies out. The Master's craft can be learned; for He is the Teacher, and we are willing to be taught. The pain in the learning is not worth considering!

Nor is wisdom the only grace we receive by means of the past. But for the sufferings of the past, we should have no compassion. Suffering to a certain extent is common enough, and every one can understand it; but suffering to such an extent as to awaken fear, horror, is what cannot be imagined by those who have escaped it. Looked at from without, it may be interesting, tragically interesting, and lending itself to powerful artistic treatment. From within, such agony is sheer temptation, and of the fiercest kind. There is a rendering of Heb. ii. 18, which presents our Lord as experiencing this supreme test of humanity: "Having been Himself tempted in that wherein He hath suffered." In other words, the sufferings He endured for our sakes were a source of temptation to Him—presented to His stainless mind the *thought* of complaint, it may even be of rebellion, against God's Will. If that is so, how near it brings Him to many of the most tried and burdened of our fellowmen, and what comfort and strength it will give them! For they are tempted to cast off their faith. Suffering in any extreme degree will seem to them useless, and therefore cruel, and those who undergo it are tempted to ask how God can be a Father and permit it. "You tell me

God is Love," one sufferer cried out in her desolation; "show me where His love is for *me*."

Yet out of this agony is born compassion, the nearest to God of all our emotions. Suffering indeed may leave a man embittered and hardened; but if borne bravely, in patience, it will yield the chastened spirit and a tenderness towards every suffering creature—a compassion that hurries forth to help and heal. Compassion has a divine impatience in it which will allow no rest until it has done what it can to bind up the wounded and comfort the sorrowing. When we think of the glorious harvest suggested by the words sympathy, compassion, pity, humanity, tenderness, which the race has reaped from its own tribulations and anguish, we almost hesitate in wishing suffering away. Life would be poor indeed without these graces, and yet there is but one path down which they come to men. If Christ could not learn obedience to His Father's will nor compassion for men without suffering, how shall we?

The world has been learning in an entirely new way the value of courage, and it may be that Christian men are at last appreciating quite clearly the more strenuous and daring qualities of manhood. It is not easy to understand how they could have been overlooked in the lives of our Lord and His disciples. Out of their experience also courage and adventure sprang. We speak of the steadiness of veterans, of men being inured, of the *moral* of an army; and what we mean is that success after success in the past, and victory upon victory, give confidence in the issues of to-day and the days to come.

Still further, a great general who has carried his army successfully through campaigns gives them assurance in a contest against any foe. Now, in the Christian life, experience of what Christ has done in the past gives them assurance of what He will do in the future. A Christian's assurance is not in himself so much as in the Spirit which is within him. There is such a thing as the assurance of the craftsman who, through many years of careful work, has built up a skill in hand and eye and brain, on which he can now count when a new piece of work is placed before him. It is not self-conceit which leads him to say: "I can do it." He *knows* he can. So does the practised Christian know that his strength came in earlier days from the presence of Christ within him, and that He will not fail him now. Archbishop Trench mentions an Indian fancy that every enemy who is overthrown yields up his prowess, which passes into his conqueror, until the hero of many fights is held to be invincible. He then applies the fancy to the spiritual life. Every soul that masters one temptation gets new power to master the next. Strictly speaking, the soul that overcomes trusts Christ more readily, and Christ thereafter has freer access to the heart and a wider range for spiritual work there. Hard though the struggle may sometimes be, those that go forth to it in fear come again bearing their trophies with them.

CHAPTER III

What is Religion?

WE cannot go far in speaking of the higher nature of man before we are led to deal with religion, as one of the most prominent, and by far the most powerful, of his spiritual activities. The word religion describes something which is essentially different from art, poetry, science, politics, and embraces its own distinct group of ideas, feelings, and enterprises. It is therefore of importance that we should have a clear conception of what it really means. This is all the more important that it claims to direct men in matters which involve eternal consequences; and not only so, but it takes under its direction the whole world of desires and motives, the purifying and ennobling of the inner life and the upbuilding or developing of the moral character of every man. As might be expected in so wide a field of thought and interest, even religious men differ in their views of what constitutes the central reality of religion. There have been endless discussions about it. Very eminent men have given for many years, and are still giving, their strength to its study—collecting and classifying facts, searching out the origin of practices and beliefs over the wide earth, among all tribes and nations. They neglect no form of rite or superstition; they despise none. No single or minute variation in a ritual escapes their atten-

tion, for they know that variations and exceptions may contain valuable suggestions. They have no contempt for the practices of any savage tribe, however low it may be in civilisation. It is facts they are seeking, and every fact is important.

What a panorama is presented to the minds of those who are interested in the study of religion, as they pass in imagination from one people to another—China, India, Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Africa; then through Europe—Greece, Rome, the old Germanic races, the Druids of Britain; then, again, through the races of America. Investigators are digging at the very roots of all these religions, trying to discover their origin, their history, their possible influence on one another. The study becomes even more fascinating as we see them slowly developing under the influence of war or commerce or migration; one degraded, another purified by the genius of some dominating personality. Let us think of what reformers have done, or of the authority which a saint or a prophet can exercise upon a people. As mere facts in human history, religions and religious leaders were bound to attract the closest attention of students. As the mightiest of all motives that have ever swayed the minds and lives of men, religion had to be reckoned with by statesmen and even soldiers; and as the one supreme agency for regenerating the race, no good man could neglect it. Here is the manifestation of a living power that is universal, that lays hold of every man, that may arrest him in his earthly ambitions, change the direction of them, or lift him to a level far above anything he had ever conceived.

There is no difficulty in discerning the presence of this fact, although the forms it assumes in different lands, and among men of different natures, are manifold. The primitive man's fear of evil spirits and his attempts to cajole them is one form of religion. The worship of sun, moon, and stars, of any of the forces of nature—that also is religion. The awe that fills men's minds at the sight of high mountains, or huge stones arising mysteriously from the wide-sweeping plains, or wells of water in the desert—that is religion. Men made pilgrimages to groves of oak-trees, built altars on hill-tops, made images like bulls or fish or flies—all in the name of religion. Every tribe had its own divinity, and every family its own protecting god; every land had a god who protected its people, and who had no power beyond its frontiers. The misery of exile, as we see from the Old Testament, was mainly due to the separation of men from the care of their own god.

It is clear that a conception of religion so broad as this will carry us further. When the Pharisee, standing in the Temple court, prayed: "I thank Thee that I am not as this publican," it was his religion that led him to say so; and when the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, it was owing to religion. It was the religion of the chief priests and elders of the people that drove them to put Jesus to death; and it was religion (may we not express it so?) that enabled Jesus to endure the accursed death of the Cross. It was because Saul of Tarsus was full of zeal for the cause of God that he participated in the death of Stephen, and hunted to death men and women who

believed in Jesus; and it was the same zeal for God that sent the same Saul to preach the Gospel of the same Jesus throughout the Roman Empire. We must go further still. When Shelley mocked at the Christianity of his day, wrote prose and poetry against it, he was serving religion, and when the college authorities sent him down, it was religion they sought to serve.

But most evidently, although there is truth in this way of speaking, it is open to misunderstanding. It may serve a purpose, no doubt, when, taking our stand outside our own convictions, we wish to act as disinterested spectators of a world-movement. Yet it blurs distinctions in thought, and progress in thought is due to the maintaining of real distinctions and to precision in the use of the words that mark them. This massing together of the different customs and beliefs and thoughts of mankind compels us to group them according to some system or other. Dr. Caldecott, limiting himself to English and American writers on the subject, has no fewer than thirteen different types of thinkers who have spent years in its study, and within each of his groups there are varieties. But they can be reduced in number, and on reflection we find that they arrange themselves in two leading tendencies.

The first of the two has as its main conception the Institution in which religion is embodied, its rites and customs, its body of doctrine. It rests on history and traditions; it is ecclesiastical and sacramental, making much of adherence to the true Church, and of the conduct of its services by properly ordained officers. The notion that this form

of religion disregards the more spiritual side of man's nature is mistaken. Those who insist above all things on the Church and its ordinances believe that our spiritual life can best be fostered and strengthened by them. Only through the sacraments properly administered by properly ordained priests does the spiritual life of Christ come to men: that is the first conception of religion, the conception of it as an Institution, with its indispensable organisation and methods. The second conception is this, that religion is a personal relation between God and man, and consists of an experience of divine mercy or love. This intimate, spiritual relationship is the ultimate reality of a living religion; here God and man meet, and through this personal contact of spirit with spirit man rises into Eternal Life. Such a view does not make men indifferent to historical fact, to institutions and sacraments, to order and beauty in public worship. These it regards as means of grace, as aids to the heart that seeks God, but as secondary to personal trust in a Saviour who has forgiven, and now bestows His grace upon His servant daily.

Those who hold this second view of religion maintain that it is the view of the New Testament. In the New Testament we do not have a revelation of new commandments, regulations and ceremonies, but the record of the experiences which our Lord's disciples had of Him long ago—what He taught them, what happened to Him in the fulfilling of God's will, and what happened to them as they walked in His footsteps and proclaimed His gracious message to men. It is the record also of their interpretations of Christ's life and death, and of the gifts they re-

ceived through the coming of the Spirit. Those who follow out the first conception do not necessarily assert that their view can be found in its details in the New Testament; they assert rather that its elements are there, and that they have developed under the guidance of the Spirit, who brings the disciples of Christ into all truth. Those who hold the second view would answer that the development is *also* under the guidance of *men*, and is therefore open to criticism and to reform—that in no case are men who are liable to error entitled to unchurch others who do not admit their developments.

This difference in the conception of what religion in its nature is rests on a difference in the conception of God; and runs out into different views of many departments of the spiritual life, as we shall have occasion to point out. The mind of man is a unity, consisting of intellect, emotion, and will, blending inextricably and with incessant variations in every life. No one can keep these in perfect balance; every one is constitutionally biassed to one or other of them. The man of intellect will emphasise thought in his religion; his brother will find his religious nature most fully satisfied in emotion; while a third will realise himself in (it may be) social service. All three, intellect, emotion, will, are present in every act of the mind, but present in varying degrees, and in the practical work of the Church this variation is clearly exhibited.

The man whose bias is intellectual inclines to lay emphasis on doctrine, which is the intellectual interpretation of religious experience. He would probably argue that there is nothing more likely to lead

to a spiritual experience than a statement of spiritual truth. In every other sphere, systematic thinking is considered necessary; why should any one try to minimise its importance in the most vital of human interests? Sooner or later we must ask whether religion is a reality: "Is it true?" we demand; and the wisdom of a man will be seen in his laying hold of what the most experienced believe to be the truth. Our man of intellect therefore lays stress on creeds and confessions, suspects innovations in doctrine, and has no patience with heresy in Church or school. He will also show an aversion to stirring up feelings in the minds of the young, or attempting to test men's Christianity by their feelings and by the experiences through which they have passed.

The man of emotions, on the other hand, contends that you may believe all the creeds and remain unchanged in heart and will. He calls the intellect cold, critical, hard, while he holds that what is needed to make a Christian is a tender, broken, and contrite heart. He is glad, therefore, to see that men are moved, and only when they are moved in a meeting he says it was living, and obviously under the power of the Spirit. When a Revival is manifesting itself in a community, the men of emotion work to gather crowds together; they expect excitement and approve of contrivances by which it is increased—the outbursts of singing, public confession of sin, sudden surprises by shouting or movement. There are plans by which a mass of men and women can be rendered pliable, or "suggestible," *i.e.* easily moved by an address. These men argue that the main difficulty in saving men from the power

of sin is the first step, the surmounting of a barrier which custom, habit, or the fear of men's judgment has placed in their way, and that it is most easily surmounted in a great wave of emotion. After that has been done, it is easy to instruct the beginner in doctrine and to lead him to Christian work.

The third type is the man of will, who believes that the deepest thing in life is neither an intellectual proposition concerning God nor an emotion, but an action. Intellect and emotion may have a work of their own, but the essential matter is that we *do* something. He does not much care whether people think for themselves or no, if only they act aright. The thinking of most men is of little avail; let them obey, for it is by obedience they come to the knowledge of doctrine. Accordingly men of this type come to insist on law and order. They point to the commandments, and regulations and methodical ways of God.

These three types are never found pure in real life. We are all varying blends of the three. Since the mind of man is a unity, each of the three is present in everything we do, and might be discerned by careful observation. The essential fact in every Christian soul is that it be consecrated to God and kept open to the influence of His Spirit. Yet our consecration is the consecration of what we are—of intellect, emotions, will. Assuredly there is nothing more futile than the attempt to offer to God something we do not possess—to whip up emotions when we were meant to reflect, to waste our life in public work when our gift is for seclusion, or to labour vainly at erudition when we have a genius for the

reclaiming of our outcast fellowmen. The charity of Christian men is widening, for they see that souls may be redeemed in many ways, and may reach the presence of the Father along paths that lie far apart. It matters little which we travel if we come home at last.

CHAPTER IV

The Soul and Its Development

EMERSON says somewhere that the main enterprise of a man is the upbuilding of a soul: but he does not mean that each man of us must sally forth alone in this rather selfish work. He cannot mean that, because it cannot be done alone. We should never discover that we had a soul, nor, if we did, could we take a single step in its advancement without the help of others. According to the light that is in us, we are all the bearers of light to our fellow men. We frequently do it without the knowledge that they need it or that we can awaken it within them. And awaken it we can. We do not give it but awaken it, for within them it is already present although unknown and unsuspected. At the beginning of last century there was living in London a boy, the son of a stableman, and a pupil in the school of a Mr. Clarke, who was in his earlier years there fonder of fighting than of books. Later he took to reading under the guidance of his schoolmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, who lent him books of poetry. One day the boy asked for Spenser's *Faery Queene*, to the surprise of the family. "He ramped through it," writes Mr. C. C. Clarke, "like a young horse turned into a spring meadow." He talked of nothing else, finding in Spenser's fairyland an enchanted world, under whose spell he became another

being. As he read, his soul was awakened within him, and the poetic genius which had been slumbering there became a passion, and made of him a poet of such distinction that, although he died at the age of twenty-five, he left behind him work that raised him to the front rank of the poets of England. That is the story of the "awakening" of John Keats. Now, what was this awakening? There was something in that boy which we are in the habit of calling genius, but of which neither he nor his teacher was aware. It was not the *Faery Queene* that planted it in him, nor did he set himself by an act of will to create it. There it had been all the while, undreamt of, until suddenly it sprang into activity on contact with Spenser; and during the few years of his life it developed steadily, bringing him at last to his proud eminence among our writers.

This leap into life is a fact familiar enough in the careers of men, and still more familiar in the sphere of Religion. In Religion it is the discovery of God, the coming of the soul into contact with the Father's love. God and man meet, and man's soul enters on a new path and purpose, in which it finds fulness of life. God calls and the soul answers; but before it can answer, it must understand, and it understands God because it is akin to Him. It recognises Him because it is a partaker of the same spiritual nature as His. In describing this fact, we are forced to use language which is more or less figurative (as indeed all language is at the root); we call it conversion, or a new birth, or a new creation. Or again, if we look at it as the New Testament does from the point of view of God, we describe

it as the calling or the election of God. It is an entirely new experience, in which we find that the whole force of our being is turned in the direction of the Eternal, our aim and end is God, and our delight is in His fellowship. But we must not suppose that something external to us has brought about the change. It must be accomplished by our own act, or it is not religious. We must have seen the meaning of the new life, have chosen it, adopted it as our line. Just because it is our act, and the act of our whole character, it has been truly described as the leap of the soul into life. It is both God's grasp of man, and man's grasp of God. In no case is it, as some men have argued, the planting within us of something foreign to our nature, but the quickening of a latent life already there, or the calling of a man in his full intelligence and energy by the Spirit of God into another and a nobler path of service.

We start, then, with this new direction of a man's energy, and ask how we can develop it. In Emerson's language, how can we "upbuild," strengthen, consolidate it? Or in language more strictly correct, how can we "unfold" it so that we shall make our calling and election a sure and settled fact? In that first and fundamentally vital step we identified ourselves with God—that is, with some aspect of His character or work. We set before us a definite end. When men try to depreciate this change, they say that the convert is carried away by some emotion; or, if the critic is a scientific man, he may, like Professor Karl Pearson, describe the voluntary act as "conditioned by stored sense-impressions and the conceptions drawn from them." But there is in it

something vastly more than that. A man in choosing *sets an end before him* and pursues it until he attains it. And the end a Christian man sets before him is the likeness of Christ or the Will of God. Of himself he must make the choice; neither without him nor in room of him can another do it.

Without being conscious of it, then, a man cannot be religious, but he may very easily be irreligious while dreaming he is fulfilling all his duty to God and man. It needs no labour or thought to drift with the stream. Thus many men are building up a future for themselves which will surprise them when it is seen. Nowhere perhaps in modern religious literature is this brought out more vividly than in a sermon preached by Cardinal Newman after he had joined the Roman Catholic Church. He describes the final judgment of an ordinary, respectable, cultivated, careless Church member, who hears his doom pronounced and makes his protest against what he honestly considers the injustice of it:—

“ ‘Impossible, I a lost soul! I, separated from hope and from peace for ever! It is not I of whom the Judge so spake! There is a mistake somewhere; Christ, Saviour, hold Thy hand, one minute to explain it! . . . I know what human feelings are; I have been taught religion; I have had a conscience; I have a cultivated mind; I am well-versed in science and art; I have been refined by literature; I have had an eye for the beauties of nature; I am a philosopher, or a poet, or a shrewd observer of men, or a hero, or a statesman, or an orator, or a man of wit and humour. Nay—I am a Catholic; I am not an unregenerate Protestant; I have received the grace of the Redeemer; I

have attended the Sacraments for years; I died in communion with the Church; nothing, nothing which I have ever been, which I have ever seen, bears any resemblance to thee; so I defy thee, and abjure thee, O enemy of man.' Alas! poor soul; and whilst it thus fights with that destiny which it has brought upon itself, and with those companions whom it has chosen, the man's name perhaps is solemnly chanted forth, and his memory decently cherished among his friends on earth. Men talk of him from time to time; they appeal to his authority; they quote his words; perhaps they even raise a monument to his name or write his history. . . . O vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profiteth it? What profiteth it?"

That is the presentation by a great literary artist of the surprise of a worldly "Christian," when brought face to face with the realities of the Eternal world. Yet what had he done? Nothing but this: he had left God out of his thoughts, and therefore out of his affections; he had built up his soul without Him; he had not made Him the conscious and deliberate end of his life. And what filled his mind with terror? Thoughts—the thought of those repulsive souls who would be his companions, the thought that he would be separated from hope and from peace for ever. Our Lord on one occasion asked: What shall a man *give* in exchange for his soul? and in asking it suggests that when a man sees it is lost he would fain bargain for its recovery. But there is no market. He cannot buy *himself* back, for he cannot be both buyer and seller. Besides, the self or soul that finds its "good" in avoiding God cannot find its "good" in His presence. He has during his whole life identified himself with

that aversion; and where he goes, the aversion goes, determining his doom.

A man, then, who would build up a spiritual life must with deliberate purpose set God before him as his end in life. And the peculiar and necessary medium through which this mind and disposition are communicated is companionship. That is an environment from which there is no escape for man. At times we may, like the Psalmist, long for the wings of a dove that we may fly away from mankind, find a lodge in the wilderness, and be at rest. But nature has devised better things for us, for although company may become a weariness and a tribulation, it is in companionship we find help and light. It is a very subtle process, however familiar, but there are elements in it which every one can detect. The pleasure we find in a companion enables us to live our own life more freely, for it is in the very expressing of ourselves that the soul grows. Expression would seem to be nothing more than speech, but the utterance of words may open up new and deeper meanings and wider relations with the world or men than we were conscious of at first. Who has not discovered his thoughts widening as he uttered them? And he can utter them without reserve to a friend, and only to a friend of his own choice. Besides in the face of his friend he can see the meaning of his thoughts and something of the value of them, their folly perhaps, or their power to help another in the perplexities of life.

The significance of companionship in the minds of most men, however, is in what they receive. Take

the case of a friend who has a strong personality, an independent character, and a firm, vigorous will. Without any self-assertion on his part he very soon asserts a superiority over us, and we, instead of resenting it, become proud of him and his strength. There springs up within our minds a spirit of loyalty—our friendship has changed into a kind of discipleship or fealty, which may be a new experience to us, but is a very valuable one. In many lives there is a real need of a leader or captain who will guide and master and subdue the roaming fancies and uncertain will. Theirs will be the joy of a voluntary and complete submission to one who is above them. Perhaps there is a little of this in most friendships, for most men have something in which they excel; when they have no intellectual eminence, perhaps their gentleness or their lowliness may make them great.

But above these values there rises this other, that we freely give ourselves away in some measure, it may be wholly, to our friend. For him and to him we can devote ourselves. Happy is he who has a friend so great and worthy that he can devote his life to him. For the soul grows in giving itself away. It is indeed never completely free to grow until it does. This self-dedication has been the mark of all the greatest of our race in the spiritual world, and is a note in the character of every one, even the humblest, of their disciples. And we cannot help doing it when we are their companions. There is a very deep-lying tendency in our nature to imitate those we love or admire. We imitate them because we find ourselves following in imagina-

tion their exploits or actions or customs; we are, as it were, rehearsing them in our own lives; and in the quiet of our thoughts we use their words and have them as a mental audience to whom we make speeches or before whom we play a part for their approval. There are more mature people who do this kind of thing than would be ready to confess it. The habit has its dangers, but there is no danger if we have chosen the Great Companion as the One in whose presence we live, before whom we perform all our works, and for whose approval alone we do our duty.

It might seem that this imitation of Christ would produce a cramped and narrow life, laboured and lacking in freedom. And that would certainly be the case if the imitation were of specific acts and details, saying this word, or that, doing this deed or that, because Christ said so or did so. But the imitation of Christ is not that, but is the adoption of a spirit, the entering into a mood or disposition, the making one's own of an attitude of mind and heart towards a Father. Moreover, this spirit or mind is the carrying out of our *own* mind, the fulfilling of our own spiritual ambition, the realisation of what we saw when the spirit within us leaped up in answer to the inward call of God. In this way Christ emancipates us by setting our true self free from the grip of our prejudices and the restraints of our sin. Goethe says somewhere that sin is what we cannot let alone; we can at any rate test what Christ has done for us by that. Is there anything we cannot let alone, cannot give up?—even for Christ? That is our sin. He is indeed the great

Liberator, by whose friendship we step out into the free air of heaven.

Companionship, however, reaches its highest in some common enterprise. In companionship we devote ourselves along with our comrades to a service of our fellowmen or of God. Our Lord has reversed many of the judgments of the world, but none of them strikes the mind more forcibly than that in which He tells us His standard of greatness: "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all." He returns to this idea once and again up to the end of His ministry. When the sons of Zebedee asked for the highest posts in the new Kingdom which they hoped would be set up soon, Christ reminded them: "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all." This must have been a surprise to the disciples, and a disappointment; but they afterwards found their joy in it, and a greatness of which at first they had no idea. The greatness was in the breadth and the strength of their own conceptions of life, and the joy was in seeing thousands of their fellowmen lifted into the liberating experience of God's love.

It is only among our fellowmen that we find ourselves. Our souls are brought to birth by their lives and words. We are nourished and developed in daily contact with them. The difficulties our comrades create for us, the controversies they raise, the obstacles they put in our way are only new opportunities of attaining patience, perseverance, self-command; while the encouragement they afford us,

the examples they present to us in their devotion, the warmth of their friendship, and their alliance with us in our common service of Christ, call out our finest powers, and build up in us a character which we trust Christ Himself may approve.

CHAPTER V

Eternal Life

IT is a natural instinct on the part of Christian men to be on their guard against any one who tries to change what seems to them the approved meaning of so vital an expression as Eternal Life. The approved and self-evident meaning, they say, is a life that goes on for ever and ever. To change it would be to imperil the belief in immortality, and that would be to rob them of a hope which almost makes the loss of their parents or children tolerable. And yet it is not merely their continued existence beyond the grave that is the precious thing to them; it is the continued existence of a *specific kind of life*, life in a definite order and with definite conditions. The life they call Eternal is a perfect life, a human life set free from the hindrances and limitations and separations which encompass us on earth. The issue, Christian men feel, is too vast, too vital for any one lightly to assail it. And no one who believes in immortality will assail it. Eternal Life gathers together all that the young have dreamt of, or the mature have experienced, or the old longed for. In all seasons and in all generations, men have sought to realise their conceptions of what life might become, have been eager to drink a full draught of it; and when the end of an earthly career has come to those they love, or is coming

to themselves, they cling with a living hope to the fulfilling of all their worthiest thoughts and efforts in another life still before them. With that faith and hope before our minds, we wish to inquire what Eternal Life really means.

To begin with, Eternal Life is a thought, an idea, a new mind, or a new attitude of mind. "This is Eternal Life, that we should *know*." "The *mind* of the spirit is life." That is (as Dr. Sanday interprets it), the content of the thinking, the general bent of thought and motive. There are other elements in it besides thinking or ideas only; but there is thinking, an idea—and that we shall look at first.

It does strike one, no doubt, that an idea is hardly adequate for so rich a term, involving such stupendous issues as Eternal Life. Is that all? we may ask. What power or enduring substance is there in an idea? An idea has no form, occupies no space, has no colour by which we may recognise it, cannot be measured or weighed or explained. Thoughts, ideas, come and go in myriads through every mind; they are mysterious, but transitory. Does not the common mind show the value of them by saying: "It is nothing but a man's thought," intending to point out that there is no actuality beyond it; or, "It is a mere idea," or "We do not want to hear your ideas, give us facts"? So we may scoff at thought; and yet an idea is one of the mightiest of the world's forces. Ideas have overthrown kingdoms, mobilised huge armies, brought millions of men to death-grapples, swept through continents like a withering sirocco, and laughed at the might of man and his glory. If it is also true that some

thoughts have made men weak and worthless, or infuriated them with the passion of fiends; on the other hand some have filled men with joy, made them strong to endure suffering and afflictions and crucifixion. We can hardly exaggerate the power of ideas, for they beautify the poorest regions of a great city and the lives of some of the humblest of its inhabitants, elevating them to be companions of the noblest and saintliest of earth's sons. They have made a horde of Egyptian slaves into a nation, and revived decaying nations into fresh power. In all this we have been but expanding the differences indicated by the scriptural terms "light" and "darkness." We need not wonder, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ, realising the possibilities of life and death, should urge men to accept His teaching and set their minds on God. The whole purpose of His life among men, of His dealings with them, of His sufferings and death, was to make sure that they should give due place in their thoughts to the thought of God.

Manifestly, it is not the mere act of thinking that carries with it such a result as Eternal Life. It must be a thought about *something*, and something very specific and definite. It is the object of our thought that matters—that which we think about. Ay, even more than that, it is what thought we have concerning it. The object is God, and Eternal Life comes to us from thinking of Him; but we may think of Him and hate Him, or we may think of Him and flee from Him, or, as Christians do, we may think of Him and love Him. Which of these attitudes of mind is ours will depend on

the thought we have of His Nature, and of His relation to us. Now in order to make sure that we shall take the right attitude of mind towards the Father, Jesus Christ lays emphasis upon His "words." When He came to men, the only way He had of reaching their hearts and lives was by words, by teaching, by speaking and enlightening their minds, pointing out to them where the truth lay. And the fascination of His teaching lay in His associating the commonest things in their daily experience with the deepest things of God. Those accordingly who heard much of it found their minds haunted by His ideas; and afterwards everything reminded them of Him—everything in heaven and earth and sea. He had so set this new attitude of mind within them, that they could not escape seeing God everywhere. He seemed to be saying common enough things, things they had known all their days, but after He had spoken there was always something new in them. Sunshine and rain, birds and flowers, were never quite the same again. But His words did more than convey new ideas concerning ordinary affairs; they expressed clearly what they themselves before had felt vaguely but never could express. They now knew what they had formerly seen as in a mist or groped after as in the dark. Thus Christ, by His teaching, gave them possession of themselves, making what was best in them articulate and predominant.

But just this, which was Eternal Life to some men, was an offence and a loss to others. They had no eye for the invisible, no sense for the Eternal aspect of the common incidents of the common day.

The lilies of the field were lilies to them, and they were nothing more. To Christ, however, they were more; they were, according to their measure, revelations of the Father. It was this poetic, this imaginative side, or (as we should now say) this Eternal side of our Lord's teaching that offended unspiritual men. After the loss of some such disciples through the offence His poetry caused them, He turned to His twelve disciples and asked: "Have you also a mind to go away?" But no, they would not go away. They said they had a reason for remaining. Although perhaps they also had been puzzled by what He had said, they had found in Him the "words of Eternal Life," the thoughts that had lifted them out of themselves and brought them into the presence of God. Through them they had come to realise the joy of accepting the Will of the Father. His words had given them a foretaste of Eternal Life, revealing to them at the same time that He was the Holy One, sent of God. Words had been spoken, and there had entered into their souls not words but thoughts which opened up to them another Universe, in which thereafter they lived what they called Eternal Life.

This brings us to consider the power of a personal fellowship in communicating truth. It was in the Fellowship of Christ that they came to know the power of this new life. Now, this enlightening power of words, of course, is by no means an unusual experience with men. There are indeed few teachers who have not been the means of helping some one—bringing to some one a word that became to him a gift of life. Plain men who are thor-

oughly convinced of a great truth do it. For it is a convinced man who convinces others. It is the spirit that has been set on fire which kindles fire in others. One might say that it is not so much the idea that works wonders as the idea in the mind of one who is fired by it. Something in the personality of the speaker passes into the idea which he believes, and the idea is transmuted. It seems to take on a personal existence, and the idea and the man from that moment are one. This is true in a very peculiar way of our Lord. So completely does He identify himself with His teaching that He can say at one time: "The *words* that I speak unto you are life," and at another, "*I am the life.*" His words, then, were not the expression of something which He had picked up in life, or had been taught, but were the express image of what He was in His inmost being. He says that His teaching was of what He had seen and heard of the Father, what He had learned in the Father's presence. In the depths of His own soul it had come to Him. There He had seen it and heard it; and when He spoke, it was not something external that had moved Him. It was Himself; and yet it was the Father who was using Him as the medium of the Eternal.

Not only did our Lord thus identify His word and soul, but the disciples identified them also, and counted that their acceptance of Christ's teaching was their acceptance of Christ. In His words, His ideas, they had Himself. They argue that there is something of the very nature of Christ that comes to those who live in His company, and have dealings with Him in their inner life. We are often

enough surprised at the refining power of the Christian Religion on the lives of those who once delighted in all that was coarse. The apostles were surprised at it in their time, and spoke of it often in their letters. They must also have been surprised at it in themselves, as we too are. We take His words to-day and read them in some such inward way as He spoke them, trying to realise personally what they mean. We read ourselves into them, or read them as if they were our own, born within us and flowing from us as living truths. What happens? We are changed at the moment somewhat, by and by changed more, changed at last into the same image. Changed slowly, it is true—oh, how slowly! Imperfect the image is which we reflect, and that is our abiding regret. But we *are* changed, and in the knowledge of it we do our work with fresh courage, returning with increasing confidence to the words and thoughts that helped us.

This is probably what the disciples meant by the fellowship of Christ. They associated themselves with Him, were constantly in His company, and found to their surprise and delight that they had gathered something of His way of viewing life; and, with the eagerness of those who had found a new joy, they desired to make others partakers of it with them. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The ideas they had acquired from their Master had brought them into accord with Him, and that not merely in their opinions but in spirit and in truth. They

had no other will than His, and His was the Father's will. Accordingly they sought to bring others into accord with themselves, and this they did by communicating what they had received, what they had seen and heard. On their own part it was a personal attachment which had sprung up from a constant companionship and intercourse with Jesus; but on the part of the Churches to which they wrote, it was what must at first have seemed a second-hand impression, a friendship and fellowship from afar, depending on reported events and words. Nevertheless it was a friendship and fellowship profoundly deeper than that, and perhaps (as we shall see) not less profound than was experienced by all but a few of the personal followers of the Lord. Their fellowship with Him was not at all what we sometimes call imitation—the repetition in their own station of words and phrases and actions which He had initiated among the Jews and the Galileans. It was a spirit. In the language of our day we might say that it was the Idea of Christ which they felt they were called on to realise—the idea freed from all conditions of locality and custom and fashion. They were called on to be Christ's people; nevertheless each man of them to be himself and not another, to follow Him and yet to copy no man, not even Christ, except in mind and spirit.

Nothing could have been more divinely perfect than the way in which the enemies of our Lord managed to stamp His ideas and His Personality upon the minds of men. He Himself with His penetrating gaze saw it. “And I, *if I be lifted up*, will draw all men unto Me.” They lifted Him up on

the Cross, meaning to unite indissolubly His teaching with crime and shame. What they have actually done has been to make it impossible for the world ever to ignore Him or His teaching. He has become the sign and symbol and guarantee to men of Eternal Life. He *is* the Eternal Life.

Eternal life, then, we understand, is not the life which good men only enter on at death, but the life they live here and now. As Christ Himself says: "He that believeth *hath* Eternal Life." It is an attitude of mind towards the events and the persons good men meet with here, towards what befalls them here, towards God whose will embraces all. As our Lord was constantly showing, Eternal Life is a way of looking at Nature, at Providence, at Mankind and their destiny, and above all, at God. He who was Himself Eternal Life manifested it in the common round of a working-man's house, and in His intercourse with the people of a country village. To those whose eyes were open, He who was Eternal Life could have been seen walking and talking with fishermen as His companions and intimate friends, in the fields and by the seashore, bending over the sick and the diseased, and revealing Life through tears and blood. He did not require to go far afield for His opportunities; they lay at His feet, came to Him in every wind that blew, were in the sunrise and the sunset. And when He sent His disciples out on this high commission of opening man's eyes to the Eternal world which wrapped them round, He told them not to go searching for adventures in foreign lands, but to find them at home—so that they might practise their

unskilled minds on things that were familiar. You will meet the Eternal, He said, in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, and in the friendless discharged prisoners who, like frightened things, are making for cover.

CHAPTER VI

On Seeing Christ

WE have all thought that it would have been easier to believe in Christ and love Him if we had seen Him. We catch ourselves wishing that He walked our streets, came to our homes, healed our sick, taught in our churches or public squares. What impressive services our communion services would be if He presided at them and gave an address! If we had been present in the judgment hall we should not have shrunk back at the word of a girl; or if we had seen the crucifixion we should have been willing to die for Him. We see what vividness the personal acquaintance of the apostles with the facts gave to their preaching, and we argue it is quite natural that it should be so—seeing is believing. Have we not all noticed how difficult it is to realise mere descriptions of beautiful scenery, *e.g.* the wonders of India, the Prairies of America, the Swiss Alps? On the other hand, how arresting is the first *sight* of the ocean to those who have lived to maturity in inland countries, what a thrilling experience it is to see a planet for the first time through a telescope. No words can convey the feeling of awe which sight gives to these stupendous facts; the experience is imperishable. It is, as we say, natural to suppose that our belief in the unseen world would gain in reality if only we *saw*

something of it. "If our friends returned from beyond the grave we should never doubt again. Why does not God do something, show us some sign to establish our faith?" Thus we reasonably conclude that if we had seen Jesus we should have found it easy to believe that He was the Son of God. Does not the New Testament bear us out in this? "Many believed in His name when they *saw* the miracles He did." "A great multitude followed Him because they *saw* His miracles which He did on them that were diseased."

There is, however, another side to this. Many more saw the miracles which He worked, and did not believe. Now, this brings us face to face with a striking characteristic of human nature. Sight tends to prevent the perception of the deeper realities. What is very familiar to us, what we see every day, is overlooked, is really hidden from our eyes. We are startled to find that those who have lived all their days within sight of great mountains frequently do not know their names. How few of us perceive the beauty of the grey days of which we have so many! Who among us has grace enough to perceive the saintly character of one who sits daily at table with us, or who serves us at table? In the time of our Lord, none of the rulers saw the Jesus whom we know, and it was their preconception of what the Messiah should be that hindered them. His coming from Nazareth, His living in a working-man's family, His Galilean accent, His appearance, His lack of what they considered a proper education—these and such things as these blinded them. Past these they could not see to the

real Jesus. As regards His miracles, it is quite evident that they were to many men of those days as great a stumbling-block as they are to many now. They were not worked in defence of national independence and against the oppressor; they were worked as readily on the Sabbath as on other days—and thus in defiance of the law of Moses. Then who could tell they were not really carried through in league with Beelzebub? “Doubtless Jesus meant well; but what a reckless destruction of property His compassion for a single Gadarene demoniac involved.” The best that could be said for Him went no further than that he had healed a number of poor people, who counted for nothing in the nation’s struggle for freedom. So they argued. Now, nothing is more blinding than a false conception, which may have been acquired in the most natural way. It may indeed have been the right conception when it was first acquired. The law of Moses was a revelation from God to the Israelites, opening up His will and His nature to them, and separating them morally and religiously from the heathen. Yet, as the prophets show us, it stood between the common people and a richer spiritual revelation. In the time of our Lord the mere traditions of the elders had become as sacred as the original law itself, and had besides “massed” the educated part of the population into a solid resistance to any change. The more Jesus appealed to the common people, the more bitter the leaders’ antagonism became, and the more determined they were to root out a pestilent heresy. In allegiance to God they felt they could not do anything else, unless they

were to become adherents of the new cause. It is impossible not to sympathise with honest men among the Pharisees, like Saul of Tarsus, who has himself portrayed his struggle. Yet in his case, as in others, a false conception slowly but inevitably passed into bitterness and malignity, ending in crime. For the honour of God, men often close their minds against the deepest truths of God, and are brought to the knowledge of their perilous condition only by the shock of their own savage deeds.

So far, then, it would seem that we labour under no special disadvantages in not having lived in Christ's own day. One advantage at least is ours; we have escaped those old Jewish prejudices, and can really estimate Him and His teaching at their own spiritual worth. Our Lord Himself saw that His bodily presence was a very real hindrance to His followers' faith, and that in His absence they would develop much more rapidly. "It is expedient for you that I go away." If He went away they would be thrown back upon themselves, upon their own initiative; they would rely more on their own resources, their own spirit; and that, said the Master, would be no loss, for He promised to send His Spirit to be their teacher—the very Spirit who had guided and inspired Himself. "*Another Comforter*" Christ calls Him, signifying that His own work with them had been that of a Comforter. This word "comforter" is an old English word which was then the almost exact interpretation of the Greek "paraclete" and of the Latin "advocate," corresponding rather to our "counsel" than to our "advocate." It meant not one who pleads for

another, but one who advises, directs, supports another. Whether applied to our Lord or to the Holy Spirit, it does not imply one who urges our case before God (as so very many have imagined), but one who pleads *in* us, prompting us what to say, encouraging, strengthening, leading us into all the Truth.

Now what was the result of this loss of the bodily presence of Christ upon the early witnesses of Christ's ministry? It was this,—an outburst of an entirely new enthusiasm in the cause. Their devotion for the invisible God grew into a blazing fire, doubt became confidence, hesitation passed into eagerness, so that in its opening centuries Christianity spread like wild-fire through the provinces.

Nevertheless men still continue to seek a sign, just as if any sign could possibly be given them, or as if there were some sign of a spiritual fact other than another spiritual fact. There is no expression, deed, or event that ever happens, which does not immediately take its place in the order of natural events, to be criticised and judged as such. When God did manifest Himself, it was as a man; and men of intelligence, noting Him, considering and passing judgment on Him, repudiated the idea that He could be the manifestation of God. "The Word became flesh"; and so far were men from believing in Him, that they crucified Him as an imposter. It was impossible to prove that Jesus was the spiritual Son of God, except to the spiritually minded.

The truth is that the Christ, whom the early disciples and all generations of disciples since their day

have accepted as their Saviour, has been the invisible Christ, whom the flesh of a man encompassed, and whose words and acts half-revealed and half-concealed the God within. We imagine that the man Christ Jesus would have been irresistible to us. Alas! He has never for a moment been beyond misinterpretation. His meekness has been counted weakness, His gentle speech timidity, His burning words ill-temper, His morality the morality of slaves. Instead of being in any worse case than the crowds who heard the Sermon on the Mount, or who stood afar off and saw the crucifixion, we, who are out of the turmoil and fermentation of that time, can in the quiet of the evening or the morning hour look into His face and, seeing the invisible Christ, adore Him.

What, then, is it to see Christ? He was a person like the rest of us, with body and mind and spirit like the lowliest of us. What does it all mean to us, who never heard His voice, never "handled" Him (as St. John expresses it), nor can ever hear or handle Him now? "Seeing," "Vision," are words that are figurative. Is our seeing Him, then, merely a figure of speech to express a "thought" of Him? We can call up the image of One moving about among men, teaching and healing them; we can follow the narrative of His life, as we might that of another, presenting as it does to our minds a richly spiritual character—a living person. Is that seeing Christ? Seeing Christ is manifestly more than faith in an idea which is working powerfully in the lives of men, more also than a conviction that the idea was embodied in a man who once

lived. There was more than that in the experience of His first disciples. The Pharisees saw and heard exactly what St. John saw and heard, yet they did not see the same Jesus at all but one who was poles apart from Him. Besides, it is more than an Ideal which is with us always, and always above and beyond us. Let us try to get some nearer conception of what our Christian experience is. We shall begin with a prayer from Bishop Andrewes' *Private Devotions*:—

O Lover of men,
very tenderly pitiful,
Father of Mercies,
rich in mercy toward all that call upon Thee;
I have sinned against heaven and before Thee,
 neither am I worthy to be called a son,
 neither am I worthy to be made a hired servant,
 no, not the lowest of them all.
But I repent, alas, I repent:
help Thou mine impenitence:
 and if there be any comfort of love,
 for Thy bowels of mercies,
 for the multitude,
 for the riches of Thy grace,
 for the exceeding abundance of Thy mercies,
 for the great love wherewith Thou didst love us,
be merciful to me a sinner,
be merciful to me of sinners chief, most miserable.

We read a prayer like this, and we notice that it is in all the parts of it very familiar; there is nothing new in it, nothing that another man might not have collected and arranged. There is, more-

over, no denying that it has its beauty, and even in the reading of it we may have felt a certain power and effectiveness. But, like all prayers, it is of small value until we have prayed it. Yet in praying it, we discover that first there disappears from our consciousness all our environment, both outer and inner—the world, business, home, cares of the present and the future. I am alone with a spiritual reality—large, vague, undefined, apart from me, yet so near me as to form a part of me. “O Lover of men!”—and I find myself opening my heart to His love. I am not merely thinking the thought that God loves me, but surrendering my being to His love; no longer standing off from Him, but entering into sympathy with Him in His love. Again, the next words bring up another feeling, that of my need of pity, mercy, forgiveness. My sins are now before me, but I am laying them before God, asking Him to look at them, but to look at them with tender mercy. I find that I am myself looking at them from the place of God, condemning them, putting them away from me. I have no explanation to give of my sins, no excuses, no arguments—“unworthy to be called a son—to be made a servant.” “Be merciful to me a sinner.”

As every one knows, the actual praying of a prayer is essentially different from reading the words, from thinking them, from recognising their beauty and power. The words have done something for us quite different; they have brought us into a Universe—a Presence which leaves its mark upon the soul. In a letter to the *British Weekly* of 19th July 1917, a lady tells of a very painful operation

she underwent, and how the pain lasted for days "at top pitch." To her horror she was told the operation and all the consequent pain must be undergone again. She proceeds:

"I was terrified—not of the pain exactly, and not of death, but of giving way to cowardice before the operation. I felt the horror in all my limbs. I felt overpowered and utterly helpless, and although I was not too certain of the personal existence of God, I began to pray. The burden of my prayer was something like this: 'I can't go through with it decently. I can't.' Suddenly I was conscious of the Presence of God: I could almost see Him. I felt that I knew where He stood. He seemed to put His hand on me. I heard Him speak. He said, 'I will be with you all the time. I will see you through.' I cannot say my fear was gone, but I know that I was comforted, and I slept. Next morning when I awoke my fear was gone. I was astonished to find that I was not afraid, but it was so. They put my operation robe on me and wheeled me to the theatre. I felt no fear of fear or of pain or of death. I felt myself carried through as a child in strong arms. I was not even unhappy. The doctor who gave me the anæsthetic asked me if I enjoyed 'this sort of thing.' I seemed to have no charge of it or of myself. It was every bit as easy to joke there as in my mother's drawing-room."

That is a remarkable instance of the power of prayer, but what is most remarkable is the completeness and the suddenness of the deliverance from terror. To many others this same deliverance comes after prayer—prayer which may continue for days. For days they try to realise the Divine Presence and dwell upon the gracious help the Almighty Fa-

ther is ready to bestow, until the moment comes when their spirit surrenders to His help. Some are conscious of a struggle. Others have none. All ultimately attain to mastery. "Seeing Christ," then, is a spiritual experience. Some will visualise according to their mental constitution. Others will see Him in the consecrated life of a friend; and others again in the patient endurance of prolonged disease, or in the fierce battle for a public good. Christ is recognised in many guises, and those who recognise Him will find in Him their peace.

CHAPTER VII

Making the Blind to See

WHEN our Lord preached His first sermon in the Synagogue of Nazareth, He claimed to have been sent for the “recovering of sight to the blind”; and so common was blindness in the land that His words when reported must have appealed to thousands. There was more than a spiritual meaning in His reference to the poor, the captives, the blind and the bruised; there were many in the land of whom these words were literally true; and because of this directness of His appeal all the people wondered at His gracious words. Yet the scene is touching. In a village congregation, where a livelihood would be easy to earn and the conditions simple, these words moved them to amazement—the poor, the blind, the bruised.

We who have our sight do not often reflect on the blessings we enjoy with it—surely one of the most surprising of all the gifts of the Creator. How unspeakable the loss of it would be to us! Yet that loss had befallen the blind of whom Jesus spoke that morning in Nazareth, and has been the lot of the blind of all ages. Think of it for a moment. One does not require to have seen a sunrise often to appreciate the beauty of Shakespeare’s sonnet, in which he speaks of the “many glorious mornings

he had seen flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye," then broadening down into the vales, "kissing the meadows" into beauty, and "gilding the streams with heavenly alchemy." After the morning comes the glory of a summer's day, with all the rich colour of land and sea and sky. Is night less wonderful than day in its revelation of vastness and solemn grandeur; or is winter after a snowfall less impressive than summer? Yet not one of these words has the slightest meaning to the blind, or leaves even the dimmest conception of what we enjoy every hour without a thought of gratitude. Their loss is great; they have never seen the faces of their children, or known their look of joy or their smile. They do not even understand what we mean by darkness, although we imagine that they live in it continually.

But our Lord meant something more than all this when He spoke of blindness. There is another and more tragic thought of it than that, and it may be the portion not of the blind only, but of both the blind and the seeing. The great and transcendent glory of the spiritual Universe may be closed to any of us. The light of it may be flooding the hearts and lives of thousands around us, and we be in darkness. In this Universe of the spirit we might venture to speak of the splendours of the morning of life, of the full day of manhood, of the evening of old age, and even of the night when life has closed. Very poor indeed is the life of a man that has had no delight in the innocence of the young, the splendid purpose of early manhood or womanhood, the strength and calm of a worthy old age. If it be

admitted (as we all do admit) that there is no season of life without sin, how pathetic is the blindness of those who see no beauty in the humble and contrite heart, or in the new determination of the penitent never to sin again, albeit we know well that sin will catch them up once more.

What amazing sights these apostles saw in this invisible world of the spirit. The book of the revelation of St. John is a long poem of sublimity, but what was he thinking of, and what was he seeing when he used that imagery?

“After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.”

Or again:—

“And he showed me a pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve

Him. And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads, and there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

There is a similar poetry and sublimity in St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," etc.

Nevertheless, there are thousands of our fellow-men who are blind to the power and the beauty of all this. More surprising still, they are blind to the fascination of the life of Jesus Christ, and to the power and beauty of the inward life manifested in Him. They have no interest in the religious experiences of their neighbours. The love of the Father, the death of Christ, the change worked by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men—these are nothing to them; to attend to such things would seem a waste of their time, and prayer the weakening of their will to bring in a new and better social order.

Our Lord's mind was full of sorrow when He thought of the unutterable loss men suffered from this blindness of theirs. He called it death. Surely

the most terrible words ever uttered concerning the fate of man were His: This blindness, He said, brought men to a condition "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." What is the state of mind that can be described in such words? We can only very faintly conceive the agony and terror that hold an awakened conscience grappling with a long career of sin. For sin, says the Lord, is the origin and cause of this blindness. In other words, men make themselves blind; they choose blindness and turn away from the light. The light exists in the fulness of its glory for all. It never ceases to shine, it surrounds every one on every side, its presence is upon them every hour of the day. In crowded city and quiet country village it is present in its power, and men do not notice it. Why do they not notice it? It concerns them and their peace profoundly. Why are their eyes holden so that they do not see it? Why does its glory never dawn upon their souls? Some evil thing must be hindering them. Christ calls it sin—the setting of some will of their own before the Will of God, pride it may be, or pleasure, or bitterness, or envy. Or perhaps they are too busy with perfectly legitimate interests, such as home, or business, or nature, or books. It is sin that hinders. If we do not see the beauty of a pure life, nor feel the charm of the patient endurance of pain or wrong, nor the strength of self-control, nor the magnificence of self-sacrifice for the sake of a great cause or a friend, or the unseen Christ; then indeed we are blind, we are lost. Some other day we shall know that the worm dieth not.

This situation of men in sin moved our Lord to pungent distress. He had come up from Jericho with the pilgrims who were gathering to the Passover in Jerusalem. The disciples had cast their garments upon the colt which they had brought, and had set Jesus thereon. As He rode they spread their clothes in the way. When they reached the brow of Olivet, the whole multitude of the disciples broke into loud rejoicing and praise to God for the mighty works they had seen Christ perform. Was this a sign at last of victory for Him? At the turn of the hill the whole city suddenly spread out in splendour before Him, but when He saw it He wept over it, saying: "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." It was too late. Christ in vision saw the siege of the city by the Romans, the starving women and children, the maddened soldiers, and the massacre of His countrymen in the streets. And they might have been saved! Nations and cities have their time of visitation when God offers them His best gifts and presses them to accept them. They delay, not knowing! But the years will not delay. Events gather together silently, and unobserved the day of opportunity dawns and sets. And now it is for ever too late. If only they had known!

Yet who dares to say it is for ever too late? We have no right to limit the mercy of God. The very regrets we feel over our lost opportunities are a ground of hope, for they are another appeal to us on God's part; and He cannot appeal (it is indeed He who is appealing) and at the same time leave us without hope. He comes to us again in our regret. The years of our blindness are past, but we see something to-day, and to-day is ours. Christ came proclaiming the recovering of sight to the blind. How can He open our eyes? Well, to begin with, our eyes are there and may be opened. Eyes by which to discern the value—the moral and spiritual value—of Christ, have been given us by nature; and it may be true, as it seems to be, that not even sin or a life of sin, can deprive us of that power. Our eyes may be opened, that is, our sin may be done away.

The story of the woman of Samaria may help us to realise this truth. As she came up the path that led to Jacob's Well, that hot summer noonday so long ago, there was nothing further from her thought than that she was blind, or that there was waiting her at the well a vision of God. During her conversation with this unknown Jew, she saw nothing but what raised her repugnance. His presence at the well was repugnant, His asking a drink of water, His religious conversation, were repugnant. Nevertheless under His spell she forgot her errand, and quickly came to see that she had found the Christ. What had happened? What had opened her eyes so that she was now able to see Jesus? He was unchanged in appearance, in mind, in spirit.

The change was wholly in her. In His own quiet, penetrating way, He had got "within her guard," deeper than her prejudices, deeper also (and here is the secret) than her sin. The Saviour of all men had, without charging her, searched her conscience until He reached the Divine that lay hidden, buried deep, and slumbering within her. "There was something of God still within her soul," in spite of her many years of sin. The courtesy of His speech, His delicate treatment of her, had allayed her irritation. His friendliness had awakened friendliness within her heart.

It is this trust in the love of God in Christ for men that sets the mind free from the bondage of sin in any of its many forms. The whole purpose of Christ in all His gracious work was to make this love of God known. To have revealed this love is indeed the glory of Christ, His supreme gift to humanity; to accept it is the glory of men. And indeed our accepting it and our exhibiting it in the ordinary affairs of the world are the best means open to us of bringing others to share it.

CHAPTER VIII

Are the Emotions to be Trusted in Religion?

IN order that we may understand more clearly the place and value of emotion in the spiritual life, let us take an incident from the life of our Lord. When the woman that was a sinner pressed her way into the house of Simon, washed Christ's feet with tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed them with ointment, she did so because of something which she knew and had already experienced of His power. This expression of her gratitude was her response to what He had done for her. One day not long before this, she had seen a crowd standing listening to a young speaker, and, joining them deeply veiled, had heard Him speak of a heavenly Father's love for sinful men, of His forgiveness of all transgressions however gross, and of His welcome to them when they came to Him in their helplessness. Could it be true that the God whose laws she had broken was not a God of laws at all, but a God of love and tender mercy towards all His creatures? She could not at first believe it. Yet the message haunted her, and would not let her rest. It returned to her in the morning, made her miserable as she saw herself, wronging, offending a Friend, a Father. She thought of her own father, how pained he would have been to know her sinful con-

duct, how glad he would have been to bid her welcome home again. Her soul melted within her, and she surrendered herself humbly to her Father in heaven. At last her little home was filled, not with bitterness and sorrow, but with joy.

Soon afterwards, she saw Jesus enter the house of Simon, and under an impulse of overwhelming gratitude she hurried home for the box of ointment, and, without thinking of what Simon or any Pharisee would say, she uttered not words but sobs, and poured out her ointment and her heart in thanksgiving to the only One who truly cared for her. What had brought all this about? It was not entirely the result of the proclamation of God's pardon and love, for others had heard it and were unmoved. There was *something in her* which gave the response. There had been in her soul, as there is in every soul at all times, a desire for fulness of life, a need, a hunger for life more abundant than anything she had yet reached. It was in her when she was a girl. She had misunderstood it, had interpreted it amiss, and, in the search for it, had (oh, the misery of it!) turned aside to sin. But sin had not stilled the craving. She sinned on now, because she was enslaved, and because public opinion held her aloof; she was the slave of her own thoughts which dogged her night and day, dragging her ever deeper down. Now, however, she was free, and this was her Deliverer. How could it matter to her what any one, or what all the world, thought or said of her now? She had been accustomed to disregard them. She broke the box and poured out the ointment; and the act liberated the pent up flood

of her emotion. That was her tribute to the power of Christ upon her soul. It was all, and it was enough. She had nothing to say, nothing to ask; there was nothing she could do save pour out her gratitude.

We learn from this incident that deep and strong emotion like this woman's rests on the fact of God's forgiveness through the teaching of Jesus. Hers was not something imitated, caught by a kind of mental contagion, nor was it suggested to her by the indirect leading of another. She heard Jesus, understood Him, and accepted His revelation of a Father's love. Furthermore, it was in His presence that the emotion took form and found its expression. Yet it was not wholly something told her even by our Lord and Saviour, not only a gift from heaven; it was also in part her own. In her own way she interpreted the message, and appropriated it for her own spiritual guidance. She had in her early days longed for a full life, and now, having found it, she yielded her whole soul to its influence. She realised at last all that ever had been good in her. Suddenly, to her glad surprise, it had sprung into a living and purifying power. She had come to her own. This it was that made her emotion and its seeming excess noble and worthy of our Lord's defence. It was this that made it *religion*.

A similar experience to this is found in all worthy religious emotion. Religion is a personal relationship to God; apart from Him, it is nothing. If the heart and life are not brought into the most intimate personal contact with Him, there is no more religion in it than in any other form of knowledge.

And if we allow our emotion to arise from or to be influenced by anything else than communion with God in Christ or His service among men, then we are in danger of abandoning the fountain of life from which alone untainted emotion flows. This is the tribute we pay to Christ, the response we make to His amazing deliverance of us, even our gratitude. Different natures will necessarily express this gratitude differently, according to their mental bias and temperament; there will be exuberance or restraint, speech and much of it or silence, benefaction or prudence. All this will matter little, if the heart's emotion fills the channels of the day's service.

It is not altogether unnecessary to remind ourselves that emotion is a general name for many things. Emotion does not exist except in the form of specific emotions, of which there are very many. There are scores of them, merely to enumerate which would probably both surprise and weary us. Notwithstanding many of them are so allied that a skilful speaker can play upon them as "one that can play well upon an instrument," passing from joy to sorrow, or from fear to hope, or from hatred to love, or from amusement to pathos. With a common audience he can touch notes through the whole gamut of their experience, the one emotion preparing the way for another until they have lost command of their feelings. That good, widespread, and lasting results have been produced by such methods cannot be denied. Indeed there have been Revivals of this kind which are landmarks in the history of the Church. This does not mean, however, that any

one may play pranks with emotion in a religious meeting. Professor William James writes:

“Every time a resolve or a fine glow of feeling evaporates without bearing practical fruit is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. Rousseau, inflaming all the mothers of France by his eloquence to follow Nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sends his own children to the foundling hospital, is the classical example of what I mean. But every one of us in his measure, whenever, after glowing for an abstractly formulated Good, he practically ignores some actual case, among the squalid ‘other particulars’ in which that same Good lurks disguised, treads straight on Rousseau’s path. All Goods are disguised by the vulgarity of their concomitants, in this work-a-day world; but woe to him who can only recognise them when he thinks them in their pure and abstract form! The habit of excessive novel-reading and theatre-going will produce true monsters in this line. The weeping of a Russian lady over the fictitious personages in the play, while her coachman is freezing to death on his seat outside, is the sort of thing that everywhere happens on a less glaring scale. Even the habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon the character. One becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up.”

Another American, living long before Professor James, warned his contemporaries against trusting to religious emotions. In his classical work, entitled *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*, Jonathan Edwards points out how people who believe in their feelings may greatly deceive themselves. For example, the strength of their religious affections is no proof that they really spring from grace, for there are strong affections which are concerning religion, and yet not spiritual. Again, a man may be able to talk both fluently and fervently about God and Christ and the work of the Spirit in the heart, and yet himself be untouched by the Spirit of Christ. Once more, a man may assure his friends that his feelings are genuine because they come to him apart altogether from any desire of his own, perhaps in the reading of the Bible, that they have in them true love for spiritual things, while all the time they are not divine at all but natural; they may, for instance, be merely literary, and the stirrings within him be produced by the beauty of the language, or the pathos of Christ's lonely and cruel death. This kind of self-deception may even go the length of awakening in him a delight in public worship, if the church is beautiful, and the music and preaching refined. He may find an honest pleasure in singing the praises of God Almighty, be grieved over the decline of the people from the faith and the practices of their fathers, and yet have no spiritual fellowship with the Father. He may even feel sure of his salvation, and be mistaken. Jonathan Edwards, with his calm, earnest, scriptural analysis of the deceitfulness of the human heart, leaves a

profound impression of the untrustworthiness of the emotions *in themselves* as proofs of a man's spiritual renewal.

To continue this line of thought a little further, let us remind ourselves how imitative men are of one another, especially in their emotions. This imitativeness is true also of thoughts and opinions, the majority picking up their views from newspapers, or from any forceful speaker, and that without reflection. This is still more true of the emotions. Observe how laughter spreads, although there is nothing to laugh at; the sight of a woman weeping brings tears to the eyes and pity to the heart; we suffer on hearing a story of cruelty; we have ceased perhaps to read the details of the war because of the pain they occasion. In a large and crowded meeting, feeling passes from one to another when they are sitting close together, as if they were in electric contact. There is no such effect in a small congregation scattered thinly over a large area. In a certain meeting of those who were willing to help in an "Evangelistic Campaign," one of the leaders gave the advice that the workers should sit among the audience and answer the calls from the preacher at once. "When those are asked to stand," he said, "who have given themselves to Christ, be you the first to stand, and those who are hesitating will be moved to stand too." We all tend to imitate one another, whether it be in a social gathering, a political meeting, or in the house of God. This is a fact in our common human nature, and is on the whole good. But it is no proof we are redeemed men that we follow the lead of an organised and

shrewd company of Christian workers, either in standing or weeping or entering the inquiry-room.

What, then, is the place and the value of emotion in religion? We begin by answering that it held a very prominent place in the teaching of our Lord and His disciples. The Beatitudes are blessings pronounced by Him who knew the subtleties of the heart and was continually warning men against its deceitfulness, and pronounced chiefly on those who manifest religious affections—the humble, the mourning, the meek, the hungering, the merciful, the pure. He calls the weary to Him, encourages the despairing, rebukes the impatient, the proud, the harsh and pitiless. The fruit of the Spirit, as St. Paul details its various aspects, consists of emotions—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, unselfishness. Over against these which are blessed, we have an enumeration of the evils to be avoided, and once again they are emotions—impure desires, envy, bitterness, hatred, anger, strife, malice. Supreme over all, as the highest testimony that emotion is divine, is the fact that God Himself is defined as love, the purest, strongest, richest, and most enduring of emotions. In return for that love, He asks ours: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” “Beloved,” writes St. John, “let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.”

After a strange lapse lasting for centuries from this predominance of love in the teaching of the Christian Church, it is regaining its old place. Love

reigns again in the hearts and in the thinking of Christ's followers. Can we trust it completely, lean with all our weight upon it as alone fitted to guide us in our life, and in our searchings after the knowledge of the nature and the will of God? Is this the key to our understanding of the attributes of God? Our generation is coming to believe it. One theologian writes: "The saying of the apostle, God is love, is the best compendium of the Christian idea of God"; another: "Love is the supreme, the only adequate definition of the essence of God"; still another: "Self-giving love is the very life of God as Father"; and once more: "God is love, the perfect, the absolutely good and only good Being, so that no attribute or activity can be ascribed to Him which cannot be derived from His love." It is this thought of what God is that has opened up the way for the cultivation of emotion in the Christian religion. And we must not wonder at the common people letting themselves go, and now and then revelling in excited feelings. If we consider the narrowness of their lives, the poverty of their homes, the character of the streets in which they live, their lack of refining pleasures, we shall understand their hunger for something that will take them out of themselves, something that may remind them of happier days, of the green fields and hills where they spent their youth and knew a father's love. Part of the success of the Salvation Army among the lapsed lies in the stir and even in the noise of their methods. They startle those who are not easily startled. The swift and unexpected changes in their services, from speech to song and from song to shouting, shake a

rude nature and get "within the guard" of the hardened. In classes higher than these the same is done in a huge Revival meeting, when it is touched and swayed by powerful emotional speaking, by stories, by appeals, it may be also by tears. A huge meeting quickly loses control of itself, and individuals who are easily carried away by their feelings may act in a manner which is painful to sober-minded Christians. This is the cause of the disrepute of emotion. There are many able and godly preachers, however, who believe in it, and who are well aware that in such excitement careless and hardened men and women are led to accept God's mercy, and to put away from them their evil living. Through means like these does God's Spirit get at the hearts of men.

What, then, can be the worth of the emotions in our religious life? Jonathan Edwards himself answers the question. In the opening of that classic to which we have referred, he says:

"Some are ready to condemn all high affection: if persons appear to have their religious affections raised to an extraordinary pitch, they are prejudiced against them and determine they are delusions, without further inquiry. But if true religion lies very much in religious affections, then it follows that if there be a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections; if true religion in the hearts of men be raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will be raised to a great height. Love is an affection; but will any Christian say, men ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? and will any say, we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin, and a very deep sorrow for it? or that we ought not to exer-

cise a high degree of gratitude to God for the mercies we receive of Him, and the great things He has done for the salvation of fallen men? or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness?"

As we have already seen, our emotions are very many in number and of very diverse characters. Their value to us therefore will depend on the nature of the objects towards which they are turned. Being Christians, we will direct them upon spiritual things; our love will be the love of God and man; our hatred will be the hatred of evil; our sorrow will be over sin. There are scores of emotions which can be thus applied. On the other hand, there are many which must be curbed, resisted, or, it may be, entirely reprobated. But those that are worthy and have received divine sanction should be encouraged in others and cultivated in our own lives. For the earnest and steady cultivation of them there are three sufficient reasons.

1. The first reason is the value of the religious emotion for its own sake, and without regard to any external good it may produce. Even if we *learned* nothing from its presence in our mind, or were led to *do* nothing for others, it would still be good. To *be* is more than to know or to do. The greatness of a man lies in what he *is*, what he is in himself, and apart from anything he has ever acquired of possessions, whether material or mental, apart from anything he has ever done. The peasants of Galilee were better in our Lord's judgment than the wise and prudent; and there may be more spiritual beauty and

worth in one man's failure than in another man's success.

“All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.”

It is true that no grace ends in itself, for even the most retired and secret grace is as sunshine. Take, by way of illustration, purity, humility, patience, peace of mind. These are not means to an end, not even the attainment of heaven. They are loved for their own sakes alone, or not at all.

“To get good,” says Dr. Martineau, “is animal: to do good is human: to be good is divine. The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves. Their *task*, be it ever so glorious, is historical and transient: the majesty of their *spirit* is essential and eternal. . . . And while to some God gives it to show themselves *through* their work, to others He assigns it to show themselves without even the opportunity of work. He sends them transparent into this world, and leaves us nothing to gather and infer.”

The first step towards God is to be poor in spirit, to feel oneself to be nothing, or perhaps not to think of ourselves—not to be conscious of ourselves—at

all, in His presence. Yet there is nothing on earth to be compared with the possession of these cloistered graces.

2. Emotion is the only way by which we can learn some of the greatest of truths. It takes its rise always in the contemplation of some object, and is an interpretation of it; in the case of religion, it is an interpretation of God in His universe, a peculiar and penetrating insight into its meaning. This interpretation is something quite different from what science finds. One does not require to depreciate science in the slightest degree to realise that poetry sees another world, breathes another air. But it *sees*. From the wise and prudent certain truths were hidden, the babes and sucklings in the world's knowledge had them revealed. "We all have wondered vaguely at the mystery and majesty of the stars," says a recent writer, "but the poet falls on his face before them, and priest-like prays us to accompany him to the throne of heavenly grace, and to say after him words that once spoken are felt to be the only ones worthy, yet such as we ourselves could never have found. And in many places where there is a shy and subtle beauty that most of us would never see, a poet's eye discovers it and his voice makes it plain to us." Does not religious emotion do that for us? Take the case of love. Love reveals *personality* to us in a completeness that nothing else can approach. "Love is blind," says the blindest of all proverbs. Why, love is the one capacity mankind possesses for penetrating to the inmost recesses of the human heart; and if it were perfect, it would see, as Christ saw, the possibility of divine sonship in the

most degraded of men. "There are no poetical *subjects*," our author continues, "there are indeed no artistic subjects, for art can find and reveal an aspect of beauty in everything that God has permitted to exist." So, too, we can say that there are no religious subjects, for by the religious man, as our Saviour has taught us, God may be seen everywhere, and especially in the lives of those who need our help. There is none so lowly but may teach us something new, if we love, none so sinful but may reveal some new aspect of the redeeming power of Christ.

3. Emotion is the immediate source of action. Valuable as emotion and truth are in themselves, they are not so valuable as action the end and purpose of which is good. The possession of the truth in doctrine, or of good and generous emotions, is often supposed to be a guarantee for a good life, and yet in too many cases has only proved a snare. We may know the right and follow the wrong. Religious education which contents itself with informing the mind without building up character and winning the affections for goodness and God may produce mere indifference or even aversion to true religion. Knowledge is not power until it is put into action, and emotion, as we have seen, is only safe when it leads to the doing of something worthy. The paragraph which we quoted from Professor William James closes thus: "The remedy would be, never to suffer oneself to have an emotion at a concert, without expressing it afterward in *some* active way. Let the expression be the least thing in the world—speaking genially to one's aunt, or giving up one's

seat in a horse-car, if nothing more heroic offers—but let it not fail to take place.” A Christian man must be continually reminding himself that the Lord in whom he has faith went about continually doing good, and called upon every one of His followers to follow Him in this. “Let your light so shine before men,” not merely that they may understand the truth or feel the charm of a Christian life, but “that they may see your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

CHAPTER IX

Christianity a Religion of Joy

A YOUNG married woman, in the midst of her struggle for a living, was excusing herself to a Christian lady for having ceased to attend church. She said that, for one thing, she did not have time, for she had to nurse her husband who was dying, to care for her children, and to attend to her little shop till a late hour on Saturday night. Then, she added: "It is all I can do to keep my courage up." "But surely," answered the lady, "church is the very place where you will get courage and hope." "No," was the answer, "I have found the preaching far too *depressing*." When the surprise of this criticism of preaching has subsided, it must be admitted that at one time it was not uncommon for preachers to dwell on that truth which lies deep in our religion, and which, when handled roughly, tends to depress, and has even driven some men to despair,—the sinfulness of the human heart, the subtlety, the persistence, the pervading and corrupting nature of sin. These may and do take possession of some minds to the robbing them of their strength. This side of truth, moreover, lends itself to the building up of an impressive sermon and the awakening of the conscience, and tempts the preacher. And even when the way of escape is pointed out, it may leave

no mark, because of the vividness, not to say luridness, of the picture of evil which has gone before it. Preaching of that kind and books of that kind are depressing. There is a depressing way of trying to save men. The preaching of judgment does rouse, it alarms, but by itself it does not save. The scribes of all ages, with the best of intentions, have gone probing for transgressions until they have found them in our not tithing our kitchen gardens. Even John the Baptist, mighty man and reformer as he was, yet was less than the least of those who followed the generous method of Christ.

In the reaction from that—a reaction which is operating in our time—there is a tendency to make Christianity entertaining, sparkling, even merry. Love casteth out fear, says St. John: Let us get rid of fear, say the new men, by ignoring it and denying that there is any cause for fear. God is good and gracious, they argue, and will never finally reject any one. They therefore cultivate joy, and speak of the possibility of attaining a joy that will be unbroken. Thus joy becomes a cult, a worship. The elevating of any of God's gifts to so high a place in the life of a man is dangerous, because it tends to take the place of God; in other words, it tends to become a new and subtle form of idolatry. Its subtlety lies in the very purity of the object of worship, in the fact that the object of worship is one of the graces bestowed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, because it is not God Himself and His fellowship that is the end, it will slip slowly away from Him, and become the old pursuit of happiness, closing in the pursuit of

pleasure. How persistent is this pursuit! Men hunger for happiness, search for it as for hid treasures; they assure themselves that it can be reached if their search is deep enough. Yet there is nothing more certain in human experience than this, that to make it the end and aim of our endeavour is to miss it, that to serve God and man for their sakes alone, to live for what is high and worthy, is to gain it. Even earthly happiness comes to us only as the blossom of the tree of honest labour and single-minded, disinterested love. The pursuit of joy in religion is a will-o'-the-wisp that beguiles men away from the pursuit of God. True and lasting joy is to be found in God alone. The heart of man is too great and the hunger of the heart too deep to be satisfied with anything less than God.

We have spoken of happiness and pleasure, only to lead up to the consideration of joy. Although the three words are commonly used as if they were synonymous, they really refer to conditions essentially distinct, pleasure coming from the senses, happiness from our surroundings, *i.e.* from our "hap" or lot in life. What, then, is joy? We shall understand it, and at the same time feel its power, if we consider a stanza from Coleridge's *Ode on Dejection*.

"O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!

And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—

And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!

What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower

A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—

We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light."

Coleridge was not only a great poet, but a deep and delicate thinker, and in this Ode he has marked off with power and beauty some of the features of joy which distinguish it from pleasure. It is the portion of the pure in their purest hour, the outcome of a life that is given to noble ends. It is from the soul that joy comes; and when the soul is in joy, it can discern the beauty and the charm of the world in which we live. Wordsworth returns frequently to this thought:

“With an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.”

He speaks of the “vital feelings of delight” rearing a young soul and working along with the influences of Nature to perfect her. Joy is indeed *vital*, ministering to bodily, mental, and spiritual health and strength. We grow, in joy; in joy our powers develop so that we assimilate the lessons of adversity, and face with new courage the struggle of life. The attention works most freely in joy, and without attention concentrated on the great realities, we shall make little progress in the spiritual life. Is it likely that men’s minds will seek to return to the consideration of these great truths if they are presented so as to appear hard and painful and to depress? Why should they be so presented when the other way is at all times open, and men can be led to undertake hard things and undergo painful things with readiness and good heart? We cannot overestimate the value of joy in the religious life, even in its most hard and strenuous hours. Temptation is best encountered, not with a light heart as if there were no fear, but with a heart glad in the assurance of God’s help. A flow of happy feeling braces men for effort. “There is no tonic so uplifting and renewing as joy, which sets into active exercise every constructive power of the body.” To set them into active exercise is to prepare them for the direction of the will. If joy is not taken in a shallow way, but in the deep, calm way we have described, it gives us new life. President H. Church-

ill King, of Oberlin College, has some valuable words on this which we quote:

“It literally makes us live more, and so gives a deeper sense of the reality of all other life. For this very reason it helps directly to convictions which make volition easy. As Keats puts it: ‘Axioms are not axioms until they have been felt upon our pulses.’ We are made for joy—body and mind; our very constitution proclaims it. Pain is not a good in itself, and unnecessary depression and needless worry only lessen our power for work, and—what is more—weakens our power to will. The relation is close and simple. Joy directly increases our vitality. Greater vitality gives greater sense of reality. This means stronger convictions. Of convictions purposes are born. And conviction and purpose make influence certain. The spiritual life may not safely ignore these facts. Joy has its very distinct mission and place in the spiritual life. Are not Christian ministers too prone to forget that the message they are set to bring is a *gospel*—good news? An ultimate message of hope is essential to the strongest living.”

If Christian ministers are prone to forget it, they have little excuse, for the New Testament abounds in joy. The Galilean Gospel seems to have been preached in the fresh morning air. When our Lord preached His first sermon in Nazareth, it was from a passage of Isaiah which His hearers must have felt to be full of joy. On the Mount, He called on those who were suffering persecution to rejoice and be exceeding glad. As the tragic end drew near, He spoke to His disciples of His joy: “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”; and He

prayed for them to the Father "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." When He spoke to them of the future life, He assured them that they who had served their Lord aright would be received with joy: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." In the writings of St. Paul, we meet with one whose joy in Christ breaks forth from time to time in songs of triumph. "Rejoice in the Lord": "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say unto you, Rejoice." And these were words he addressed from prison to a congregation who were at the moment called to suffer for Christ's sake, and who were apt "to be terrified by their adversaries."

Whether a man can rejoice in his sufferings depends upon the view he takes of them. An Arctic explorer is not disheartened by the pain and cold and dangers of his enterprise. Soldiers are not downhearted at their risks or hardships or even their wounds. They have set their minds on what lies beyond their present sufferings. They have a purpose in enduring; they know the meaning of it; they see the victory ahead. Just so the apostle grasped the meaning of this great adventure we call life. He saw the wisdom that lay at the heart of things, the loving and redeeming purpose in every event, if he and his congregations could receive them aright. He looked forward—beyond the present pain—to the large, divine issue, and rejoiced. Life is at least as splendid and a noble life as heroic as an exploration of the Arctic seas, or as the capture of a height; and the hardships of life will no more daunt the courage or darken the spirits of a Christian than of a soldier or sailor. One of the words the apostle uses is

sometimes translated "rejoice," sometimes "glory," sometimes "boast"; and the word means that high condition of mind in which a man lifts himself, as it were, above himself and his surroundings and men's thoughts of him. It is the feeling which is expressed by Wordsworth when he writes of the negro general who freed the slaves of Hayti, and who was betrayed and thrown into prison. The poet addresses him in words which might have been sent to the great Apostle of the Gentiles had he ever needed them:

"Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind."

The words we have italicised show us the value in life's battle of the spirit that rejoices. It is a "friend"; it strengthens a man so that he can endure, and wait for the victory. So St. Paul "boasts" or exults in God through Jesus Christ; if he must boast (exult) he will exult in his infirmities; "God forbid," he cries out, "that I should exult save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There we have something of the secret of his extraordinary energy and confidence in his work within a world that was contemptuous of him, that ridiculed the very conception of his message, and lay dead and in utter darkness. He had, in his own heart, experienced

Christ, the mighty power of God, and knew that He could set any man—all men—free. The friends that came to his support were exultations, agonies, love, and a mind that was unconquerable because it was Christ's.

There is another quality in joy, frequently overlooked, to which we must refer. It is often said that, like some other emotions, joy is self-seeking, self-centered, a form of self-indulgence—subtle indeed, but therefore all the more to be feared; to make joy the object of cultivation, it is said, is sure to end in the cultivation of pleasure. Now, on the contrary, joy is not self-seeking; nor (when it is rightly conceived) does it tend to the love of pleasure. It is opposed to pleasure-seeking, pleasure-loving, as we have said. In his work entitled *The Foundations of Character*, Mr. Alexander F. Shand discusses the Emotions and Sentiments, and their tendencies. Two chapters of the book are devoted to the study of Joy, its analysis and characteristics. The author distinguishes it from pleasure in this that *it is not self-regarding*, but directs attention to its object; and thoughts follow attention. As every one knows, we cannot attend to one thing and at the same moment think of another. "Where a man's joy is," says Mr. Shand, "there will his thoughts be also." A Christian may be described as one who finds joy in God. If he does, he will turn to the thought of Him and His cause continually; the very joy will keep his attention turned to Him. That is the reason our Lord can speak of men hungering and thirsting after righteousness, because this thirsting implies the presence of God in the heart; therefore are they

blessed. They do not ask: How can I get more *joy*? but, with the Psalmist: "My soul thirsteth for *God*, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before *God*?" A very little experience shows us that to turn the mind away from the object is to lose the joy that arises from it. Joy therefore strives to maintain the object as it is; in matters of religion, it resents all attempts to change the character of the object, *i.e.* God, on whom the thought is fixed. "Joy," says Mr. Shand, "is essentially a conservative system, which resists 'improvements' and 'progress,' because it does not discern defects, so long as the joy is complete." It seeks a fuller knowledge of God, not for the purpose of attaining a fuller joy, for that again would be to reduce God to a place subordinate to joy, it would be to make joy a greater good than God. It seeks a fuller knowledge of God for His own sake, since He is the supreme good and end of all life. "True joy is a serious thing," says a Latin proverb. Nevertheless in our seriousness, we must remember that it is joy we are called on to cultivate. Grave and wise a Christian may be, but withal cheerful, affable, easy. "I would have you always innocently cheerful," wrote Fénelon in one of his letters, "for cheerfulness is good both for body and soul." It would surprise some good people to know how the saintliest of men and women have inculcated and practised joy both in their religion, in their business, and in their trials. Gladness hung about them like an atmosphere, gladdening the hearts of all with whom they had to do. Hard duties became easy to them, burdens grew lighter, and even sorrow found a light playing on it from heaven. The

Prophet Isaiah says: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness"—that carries through his deeds of kindness with joyfulness. God meets him, manifests Himself to him, and joins forces with him in his good work when he delights in it. When men are not sure of themselves in their Christian service, however high or however humble, when they are troubled with unquiet tossings and fluctuations of mind, let them be persuaded to work for God, and to work in joy, and the calm and the assurance of heaven will descend upon them. There may even come to them what an old writer calls *the high Spring-Tides of Joy*, which he describes as

"a joy that is unspeakable and glorious, that rises up in the soul and holds it with a sweet and potent delight, so long as it is the ways of obedience." He admits that "such experience is not a common one, yet God sometimes vouchsafes it, *especially to the most laborious working Christians*, as a cordial to revive and quicken them, that they should not faint and grow weary in their work. He gives them, many times, such foretastes of future glory, such bright glimpses of Himself passing before them, that they scarce know wherein their state differs from the state of the glorified; unless it be that it is of short duration."

And the writer of that was not a mediæval mystic, but an Anglican Bishop.

Such an experience is quite unusual, and comes not to those who set their mind upon attaining it, but to those who are thinking of God and His people. Howbeit, we shall not work long without some reward; and we have no right at any moment to be downcast, seeing the world is throbbing with divine

blessings. Dante in the fifth circle of his *Inferno* places the souls of the wrathful, and describes how, in the muddy marsh of Styx, they smote each other not alone with hands, but with head and breast and feet, and tore each other with their teeth, piece by piece. Underneath the water there were souls who sobbed and sighed, and with their sighs made it bubble at the surface. Who were *they*? Just those who on earth were cheerless and dispirited. "We were dispirited," said they, "in the sweet air, which the sunshine had made glad, and were always bearing about within us vapours that robbed us of a will to good. Therefore lie we here dispirited in this black mire." What right has any one, however tried, to shut out of his life the sweet air which the sun makes glad? And what right has any one to preach so that men are depressed, when their commission is to proclaim the love of a Father who never wearies of His children, whose discipline of them is to purify their hearts, and who by His mercy is offering them a joy now which will bring them at last into the joy of their Lord? O soul depressed, have patience for but a little, and the clouds that hang low and heavy about your heart will break and the glory of Christ's gladness will shine upon you.

CHAPTER X

Compassion

THE word "humanity" has two meanings. It is applied in the first place as a name for the whole human race, and in the second as the special characteristic of the race. Now the human race has many characteristics, and certainly humanity is not the one which writers have generally supposed to be mankind's outstanding mark. Not even Scripture ascribes it to them. To say, then, that humanity is the deepest thing in our hearts seems at first absurd. And yet some strange influence has been at work to bring it about that the word which embraces the whole of mankind is also our most general term for kindness. One cannot even write this word "kindness" without noticing that it, too, bears witness to the same truth. "Kindness" is derived from "kin," which means our kindred. Kindness is the feeling we have for those who are related to us, who are of the same race. These two words, then, tell us this, that deep down in the human heart, deeper than selfishness or anger or pride, there is kindness, a feeling that men are akin to one another. The world, which is believed to be hard, has seen this fact, and has already forced "humanity," the race, to recognise that its deepest and truest nature is "humanity," compassion for our fellowmen.

Once more we must turn our attention to words. Compassion is not the same as pity. Pity is more external, and is commonly applied to the feeling one has for another who is unfortunate and outside of our own life. An impulse to help perhaps—certainly the idea that help ought to go forth—springs up in the mind, and we do something to help, or at least think of doing it. We pity the poor, or the afflicted, or the degraded; but we also pity those whom we despise. Still further, we can speak of the pity we have in thinking of a disaster or a crime or a great war. “What a pity he did it!” we can say; or, “It is a pity he ever left home.” We all remember the heart-piercing cry of Othello, after Iago had poisoned his mind concerning Desdemona: “But yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!” We at once perceive the gulf fixed between pity and compassion. We cannot say “the compassion of it.” Had there been a trace of compassion in the heart of the Moor, there would have been no murder. So also, compassion is not the same as sympathy. We may have compassion on those with whom we have no sympathy, and it is possible to have sympathy with a movement, while it would be ridiculous to say we had compassion on it.

In compassion we enter into the very soul of another, taking part in his sufferings. The anguish of the poor becomes an anguish to those who have no reason to fear poverty; the pain that wrings the brow of a friend wrings ours, not through a bodily imitation of it, but through realising the friend’s mental condition. We see men and women blundering and stumbling into the clutches of wicked men,

and it is not anger that moves us or scorn, but compassion, when we feel as if they were our own family and their danger ours. There are few of us who have not reflected as we witnessed moral catastrophes: "That catastrophe, but for the grace of God, might well have been mine." One warning word, spoken at the right moment, held us back, and, as we see others hurrying to disaster, and recall our warning, our whole soul goes forth into our former position of danger again, and we have compassion. We do not stand aloof, with words of blame or reproach; we desire to help. Their burden becomes our burden, and we are eager to do something that will save them. This is something of what we mean by compassion in our day. It is not an instinct which we have inherited, but something inherent in the diviner part of our nature, that distinguishes us from the brute. We identify compassion with our manhood, with the spiritual nature which is ours because we are not brutes but men. To fling compassion away is to return to the level of the brute.

The meaning, however, has been vastly extended by our Lord Jesus Christ. Humanity, compassion, has been a new thing since He lived among men. It was possible in earlier days for men to limit it to compatriots, and be conscious of no obligation whatever to an enemy. Even the Jews claimed the right to have an eye for an eye. Out of all that Christ has lifted His followers, and shown them that the burden which lies on any heart, of friend or foe, is a burden on theirs, as it was on His own. Whatever may be our misfortune, failure or defeat in spiritual life or work, He takes his share in it with us. The

deeper the suffering is, the more does His compassion grow.

What might perhaps surprise men most, were it not so familiar, is that He has compassion on sinful men. At this point our thought is, not that He *forgives* them, but that He enters into their life of sin, feeling the misery of it, bearing the anguish which comes to them when they realise their guilt, and how they deserve punishment and the very enmity of God; and in feeling and bearing it He has compassion on them. Nor is there any limit to it. The more wicked men are, the more does He follow them and call them to His Father in tender mercy. We, through the limitations of our moral nature, say there are men on whom we can have no compassion, against whom we believe we ought to manifest fierce and merciless reprobation. But it was not so, and is not so, with Christ (blessed be His name); He saves to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. His compassion never fails. The deepest degradation is reached when a man no longer knows his degradation, when he so thoroughly identifies himself with his sin that he does not see it to be sin, when sin has become his nature, and he says: "Evil, be thou my Good!" Yet down even to these, Christ goes with His compassion, because He understands how the sin has arisen, how it sprang from some thought and desire of enjoyment, some germ of self-will, some incompetency on the part of a parent or a teacher in warning the youth, some companion, some dulness of mind, or bluntness in moral feeling. He knows our story through and through, and His love has been at work in it all. He

is pained and distressed, and is therefore moved, we may even say driven, to save the world. Sin became a burden to Christ when it was no burden to the sinner at all. Men had sinned their conscience away; and this is the last stage of guilt. This was the daily cross He had to bear, long before Calvary drew near. Yet the misery of that guilt He entered into of His own will.

We see from this what compassion means for a follower of Jesus Christ. It means a compassion which enters with understanding into the origin and growth of the dangers or the moral catastrophes of men. The worst of men began life pretty much as we who would now help him began ours, with brightness and hope and some faint glimmering of the light that comes from heaven; yet also with the possibility of great evil within him, as with us all. The stronger his nature was, the further he would go into evil, if it got a start. The potency of good in his nature became the potency for the disaster which has awakened our compassion. Some gracious hand guided us aright; some malignant hand led him to take his step downward. He did not know what the issue was, thought it was an adventure, and that success in it would be a feather in his cap. He had his little hour of glory in his street, and he tried again. His sister's very patriotism made her proud of those who would fight for her and her country, and led her into the zone of moral danger in her own town. These, and a hundred others, are the people whom we must understand, and on whom we must have compassion. Anything, everything may become a temptation; it comes stealing, crawling in-

to the most Christian homes, if the home is not sleeplessly vigilant. How deep the reproach: "No one warned me, and I did not know"; how bitter the regret over "the brief madness and the long despair"; how piercing the heart's cry:

"I was so young—
I had no mother, and I loved him so."

This is our call, as disciples of Christ, to understand the agony, the despair, or it may be the hardness that comes from sin, the deadness of soul, the pride in it, the cynicism—to understand and to have compassion. To be a worker for Christ and for man, we need His power of penetrating to the very core of the sinner's life, of seeing there abiding still the child-mind, the youth's hopes and aspirations and regrets, all buried under callousness, and out of sight; and we need the power also of realising that this stained soul is a soul like ours, and as capable of being cleansed and restored as through the mercy and compassion of Christ our own has been.

That is one aspect of life, but there is another. Would it not be better, men have for long argued, and are arguing still, to let the wicked reap their harvest, and give our time and strength and our soul-agony to helping the deserving? One cannot but remember Carlyle's outburst against reclaiming those who, for their country's good, might well be left to perish:

"Most sick am I, O friends, of this sugary disastrous jargon of philanthropy, the reign of love, new era of uni-

versal brotherhood, and not Paradise to the Well-deserving but Paradise to All-and-sundry, which possesses the benighted minds of men and women in our day. . . . In brotherhood with the base and foolish I, for one, do not mean to live. Not in brotherhood with them was life hitherto worth much to me; in pity, in hope not yet quite swallowed of disgust,—otherwise in enmity that must last through eternity, in unappeasable aversion shall I have to live with these! Brotherhood? No, be the thought far from me. They are Adam's children,—alas yes, I well remember that, and never shall forget it; hence this rage and sorrow. But they have gone over to the dragons; they have quitted the Father's house, and set up with the Old Serpent: till they return, how can they be brothers? They are enemies, deadly to themselves and to me and to you, till then; till then, while hope yet lasts, I will treat them as brothers fallen insane;—when hope has ended, with tears grown sacred and wrath grown sacred, I will cut them off in the name of God! It is at my peril if I do not. With the servant of Satan I dare not continue in partnership. Him I will put away, resolutely and for ever; 'lest,' as it is written, 'I become partaker of his plagues!'

"In brotherhood with the base and foolish, I, for one, do not mean to live. Till they return, how can they be brothers?" says Carlyle. Says Another: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Not in pity merely, but in divine compassion, He walked in company, He ate and drank, with publicans and sinners, with those who had quitted the Father's house and gone over to the dragons. What hope was there in doing that? What is the worth of having compassion on the worthless? In these days of fierce moral indignation against un-

utterable evils, do we not sometimes in our inmost heart take the side of Carlyle, and *feel* that perhaps the Gospel of divine compassion is too slight, hardly adequate to the occasion?

The answer is easy. Compassion is creative. In the Universe of Morality, of spiritual personalities, it is the only creative force. Notwithstanding sin and the fact that men and women have set up with the Old Serpent, there is still something of the divine in every man, something pressing upwards through the frozen soil of their nature, something seeking the sunshine and the warmth of God's love. This man, dead and buried if you will, compassion sets out to reach, and never wearies in the seeking, laying hold of the frozen soul, and clasping it to its own warm heart, breathes upon it, until it also breathes and moves and lives in God.

The compassionate Christ saw deeper than any man had ever seen before into the spirit of man, deeper than the sinner's sin and his natural "corruption." He saw in him a soul of which he was entirely unconscious. So does He see us still, thinks of us as heirs of a life which is not yet ours, dreams of us, imputes to us a disposition we do not actually possess, and in His own mind sees us already clothed with a beauty not our own. By His compassion He creates within us a new spirit which breaks out into new desires and aims and efforts. He works out our salvation with us, both to will and to do.

The change which takes place in us may be compared to that witnessed in cold climates when spring comes. Serge Aksakoff, the famous Russian writer, in his *Years of Childhood*, describes what he saw.

First the snow on the hills would melt and pour down their sides in torrents, the water spreading everywhere. "I saw a strange sight. The ice of the river was cracking and breaking up into separate blocks, between which the water splashed; the blocks pursued one another; a big and strong one would submerge a weaker, or rear up one edge into the air and float far away in that position; sometimes both blocks were smashed into little pieces and sank with a crackling noise in the water. The migratory birds began to return. Crowds of them, in large or small flocks, jostled one another on the edges of the water. They came in myriads, some flying high and steadily, and almost out of sight, others low and alighting often. The air was full of their calls and cries and whistles. I was awestruck and stunned by the spectacle." And when at last the waters subsided and the sun rose higher in the heavens, there came the grass and the greenery of the trees, and all the rich promise of summer and harvest.

It reads almost like a parable of what takes place in the soul of a man when he comes into the presence and power of God. Compassion is the summer sun which penetrates to the slumbering life, and calls it into power and undreamt-of beauty. We, who were dead through our trespasses and sins, feel it moving us, rousing us, and we enter on a struggle and continue it until (marvellous to say) the life He has bestowed on us casts off the sin we had imagined to be inevitable and unconquerable, and we go forth from the house of the Old Serpent, and from dwelling among dragons, free.

Compassion is creative. Whatever attainments in

grace a man makes, he humbly acknowledges to have been made by another power than his own, by the coming into him of another life and a better than his own. And it is his knowledge and sense of this bearing and sharing of his burdens and misery by Another that has done it. Christ bore the load and the shame and the anguish of our unworthiness. He had no call to bear them save the urgency of His own nature. Now He sees us in the thick of the fight with evil, our own and our brother's; and although we blunder amazingly to our deep grief, He comes to us compassionate and helpful, giving us new hope and encouragement, sending us out to manifest in our own poor way the power of this all-conquering Compassion.

CHAPTER XI

The Wrath of God

WE wish to deal with this dark question solely as a transcript of the mind of a Christian man. No doctrine is likely to hold its ground unless it is found to rest on our religious experience; and this doctrine holds its ground against the very strong assaults which have been made upon it because the conscience of man bears testimony to its truth.

We find it easy and inspiring to proclaim the unchangeable love of God for sinful men, but a man who is conscious how sinful he is does not always find it easy to believe in it. Indeed, under a deep sense of sin there is nothing more difficult to believe, and this for two reasons. The first is: we cannot forgive ourselves. Words which we spoke many years ago, and deeds of which we were guilty, but which have been long forgotten by those against whom they were done, still rankle in our memories and make us ashamed of ourselves. Our shame is not concerning a person who no longer exists now because he has been completely transformed; it is concerning a person who, in spite of his transformation, still charges himself with the sin, still confesses it to God, mourns over it, and takes warning from it for the future. "That," he says to himself, "is the

kind of evil of which this nature of mine was capable, and of which, but for the grace of God, I am capable still." He does not live in any fear of it, because he has learned what the grace of God can do; but he realises that the words and the deeds were his, and would shrink from the thought of being accused of them in the presence of those he loves.

The second difficulty he has in believing in the love of God is the wrath he himself feels against the workers of gross iniquity. As he reads the story of wrongs done to innocent women and children, of cruelties and barbarities unutterable, there bursts forth within him a burning indignation, a consuming fire of wrath against the guilty men. He demands punishment for the crimes; he will not listen to pleas of mercy; the earth, he argues, must be purged of such corruption. "If these things were done to my family, I could never forget them, never forgive them." And he justifies himself by maintaining that such indignation, such mercilessness, is worthy, holy, divine. It is but a reflection of the wrath of God. Wrath would thus be conceived as a permanent attribute of God.

This, then, is our problem: How can One who, in His holiness and justice, has any such feeling towards sinful men love them unchangeably? How could He, before the foundation of the world, have meditated anything but wrath against wicked men? However painful it may be to think of, many men feel driven up to accept the words of St. Paul: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth within them, and go on indulg-

ing in their iniquities. Therefore *God gave them up* to work out their own doom." How can we reconcile this abiding wrath with this eternal unchangeable love?

As we look out upon the world in its darkness, and think of sin, we see how widespread it is, how deep and subtle, how it spreads into every department of human life, and how terrific its effects are in every land. As we look into our own hearts, who have been born and nurtured and disciplined in the Christian religion, we realise what sinfulness remains, pride, greed, bitterness, with what difficulty evil is held back, how sudden are its surprises. We are ashamed.

What, then, is sin? What is it in its nature, at the core, and in its essential meaning, that it should produce in feeble men such a brood of hell? We see the importance of the question. To begin with, we must take note that it is not a *thing*, which we can see and deal with as external to man. Nor is it any special act or event. No doubt it manifests itself in words and actions and events, and we can detect its presence in them; but it is not the action, not even a quality of any word or action, that makes it sinful. It is in its inmost nature wholly a state of a man's mind—it lies within a man's thoughts and heart and will. It has no existence apart from a person; and one who has fallen below the level of a *person* cannot sin, however brutal his actions may be. A sinner is a person in a wrong attitude of mind. And what is this attitude of mind which works such havoc in the world? At the root, it is selfishness—self-seeking, self-assertion, self-indulgence. It is

thinking continually of self, caring for self, working for self. Our Lord is speaking of this attitude of mind when He says in the Sermon on the Mount: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The word "evil" means self-seeking, and is set in opposition to the word "single" in the preceding verse, which means generous. To be self-seeking is to live in the realm of darkness from which a man of himself excludes the Light of Life. To be out of friendship with God, to be indifferent to Him, to have a distaste for His view of life and to turn away from it—that is sin. For a puny and ignorant creature like man to set himself up in independence of his Creator, to ignore Him, to fight against Him, and seek to have his own way—that is not merely ludicrous, it is sin. Sin is self-centredness.

Now, God is and must be eternally opposed to this attitude of mind. He cannot tolerate it, because He is God, and because this mind, which we have been describing, is radically opposed to love. It is self-seeking, and love is self-sacrificing. We do not satisfy the needs of the situation by saying that God must necessarily be dissatisfied with sin. We must go further, and say that He cannot bear it, dare not bear it, if He would be God. He can show it no quarter, can have no mercy on it, must by His very nature as a God of holiness clear it out of His Universe. It will not matter what the cost may be to Himself, or to man, He must be rid of it. In saying all this we are only transcribing what the conscience of man says about those sins that move him, what judgment it would pass against the vio-

lence and degradation and rebellion of men if it were called to speak for God. And when the conscience thus judges, it is declaring that for man as for God there is an eternal separation, a gulf fixed, between men of the single eye and of the evil, *i.e.* between the generous-hearted and the selfish, between holiness and filthiness, between the heavenly and the earthly mind, between the love of the Father and the love of the world. Yet it is not enough to say that there is eternal separation between them; there is eternal enmity, and compromise is impossible.

How, then, can God love man? God is love, has been love from the beginning, and has remained love unchangeably through the ages. Seeing what man would become, and what depths of sin he would reach, He, notwithstanding, created man, and created him in love and for love. Yet the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness of men. How could God create in love the very man whose deeds He saw would call forth His wrath against them? How can He go on loving them, while they call forth eternal enmity, uncompromising antagonism?

Has the experience of the human heart any light to give on this solemn matter? What if the wrath of God should after all be love? What if the natural expression of love should in certain circumstances be wrath? That is what we believe, and now proceed to explain, and the explanation will be no more than transcribing a page from the story of man. Love can never take calmly the sinful life of one who is dear—the nearer the relationship of the transgressor, the deeper is the pain and misery awakened by

his transgression. The sin of the prodigal son is torture only to his father and mother; a stranger, even a friend, can bear it, a parent's heart is wrung in anguish. Not only so, but the prodigal will at times rouse within his father's heart fierce protest and indignation. It may have been the lot of some of our readers to witness the misery of a father as he confided the wrongs he had suffered at the hand of an abandoned son, and to hear the words of burning rage with which he denounced his unnatural behaviour. Sorrow and wrath combined to make him speak: "He has deserted me in my old age, he has robbed me of my little pension although he knew I was starving. And to think that I nursed him as a child and carried him and cared for him and denied myself that he might get on." It was the father's affection, outraged and betrayed, that made his words like consuming fire.

A man's wrath against sin is strongest against those whom he has trusted, and is at its fiercest against those whom he has loved and who have outraged him. The word wrath does not at all describe the feeling we have at the crime of an unknown man in a foreign land. The crime of a son or a daughter stirs us to the very depths of our being. We feel the shame of it, perhaps (as in the case we have mentioned) the ingratitude of it, and there is also wrath. King Lear's indignation against his two daughters, to whom he has handed over all his power and wealth, but who turn him in his old age from their door out into the pitiless storm, is surely the utterance of the common heart of man.

“I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription; then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man:
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join’d
Your high-engender’d battles ’gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! ’tis foul!”

The pain and the shame and the sorrow may seem to drown the feeling of anger, but the anger is there. Before God there is none of us a foreigner; all are His children, and therefore there is no difference in His feeling of opposition to our sins. The world He loved when He gave His Son to death for it was the world against which His wrath was revealed.

What can it mean but this, that the wrath of God is the consuming fire of His love? The love of good men or women for their children, as every good man or woman knows, is not an easy-going, soft-hearted good-nature. It is not a pampering and defending and excusing of them in their faults and blunders and excesses. It is righteousness aglow with the fire of love. It is goodness in full activity in order to make their children good. Love never shrinks from causing pain to one who has done wrong; it speaks out firmly; it is sharper than a two-edged sword; it is not afraid of causing suffering, but only of leaving the root of evil in the wound. In all this, it suffers more pain than it causes, but it takes no account of the cost it may have to pay. Love will pay any-

thing, endure anything, inflict anything, if only it can save the one beloved.

God did not begin to be love when Christ came, for He is unchangeable; and the love which our Lord so wonderfully revealed had through all the ages been working with men. Nor does He now change in nature because men sin the more by ignoring His Son. He does not become weary in seeking us, or perverse in trying to overcome our perversity. He is still the same loving Father He has always been. Our sin has only brought the everlasting truth into the full light of a glorious day. To-day clouds and darkness seem to hide Him again, and yet to discerning eyes this light is breaking through. Perhaps the force of love's tide will be felt all the more deeply because of the resistance men offer. It is possible for men not to notice the strength of a deep and rapid river in flood until it meets the obstruction of rocks in mid-stream. There it is no longer smooth and silent, but breaks into rage and foam; the raging of the water is the manifestation of the river's strength. So is God's determination to save our race from sin made manifest in its depth and strength only when it breaks and beats against the opposition of iniquity. The world asks: Where is His love to be seen in the hurly-burly of our time? Surely, in the hearts of men who love Him, in the pain they feel, in their horror at barbarities, in the white heat of their wrath against the wrongs done, and above all in their stern and pitiless determination that these shall not again be possible.

A distinction is sometimes made between God's method of dealing with men who have rejected His

mercy and those who have accepted it. It is said that He punishes the wicked and chastens His children. The distinction is valid enough, nevertheless it does not lie in what God sends on men, but in the spirit in which men receive it. In the Old Testament any disaster that happened to the Chosen Nation could be described as chastening, because they were all God's people. Thus we have in Proverbs iii. 11: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord: neither be weary of His reproof; for whom the Lord loveth He reproveth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." This would apply to any Israelite, good or bad. In the New Testament, sonship is not treated as a national affair, but as the portion of those who believe; and it is therefore thought by many that God makes a difference in His outward treatment between those who are within and those who are without His family. Those who are without endure His wrath, and those who are within His chastening. But as we all see, the plain fact is that the events are the same events; the difference is in the spirit in which they are viewed. It is not only the sunshine and the rain that fall equally on the evil and the good, but the devastating hail and the drought. In communities and nations we enter alike into the blessings and the chastenings of God. Indeed, His chastenings are but an aspect of His blessings. God is not to be considered as acting in hostility to His creatures. Now, if on reflection we come to conceive of *all* men as God's children, and of God as dealing with all for their salvation, if that is the end and purpose of all that befalls mankind, then tribulation is meant as chastening for us all.

This is an element in our training, and what seems so evil, and is to us so often a heavy burden, is in the issue of it good, if we can accept it as training. The disasters of the wicked are still God's discipline, and therefore tokens of His love. They are His childreu, all of them, even the worst and most rebellious; but there can be no compromise with a rebellious will and no tolerance of their sin. The thought that the sinner can without forsaking sin fall back upon God's love is to misunderstand the purpose both of His wrath and of His love.

CHAPTER XII

The World of Desire

ON a lovely day in July, wrote a learned author, whilst sitting indoors in the city working, I received a present of trout from a friend in the country with an invitation to spend a few days with him. Nothing had been further from my mind that morning, and indeed I had read in the newspaper the name of the village where he was living and of the stream that flowed through it with indifference. But the sight of the trout called up the thought of the fresh air, the hills, the heather, along with memories of my former fishings in the neighbourhood. In a moment I saw myself in the company of my friend by the banks of the stream. I saw the trout rising, saw myself catching them, trying again and yet again and still succeeding. If I could have been suddenly transported to the stream when the thought of it first rose in my mind, if I could have found myself actually fishing—there would have been no need on my part to desire, as there would have been no time to do so. But when the thought arose within my mind, it was met by another thought, viz., This work I am at now must be done. Now, if I give up neither the idea of my fishing nor the idea of my work, but try to keep both before me, the result is an unpleasant feeling. Backward and forward

my mind sways from the fishing to my work and from my work to the fishing; and this unsettlement I can get rid of only by dismissing from my mind the thought either of the holiday or of my work. But if the thought of the fishing rises more clearly than the thought of the work, then the moment that this happens *desire begins*. No matter how slight the preponderance is, the moment in which it asserts itself sees *the coming of desire*.

Now the question for us is: What produces this change from indifference to desire? And further, we shall try to show that this something which we call desire (or aversion) is a vast world in itself, which has moved humanity through all ages, and is moving it to its depths now. Still more, it is the ignoring of this factor in life that leads so many religious teachers to imagine they have done enough when they have given religious *instruction* to old or young. One hears from time to time a parent or a teacher say: "Did I not tell you, did I not warn you, and yet you have done the same again?" Most men have at one time or another been disappointed or angry or offended because an erring fellowman did not follow the good advice they so earnestly and freely bestowed. "You knew the way. Why didn't you take it?" The mistake which is so constantly made is in supposing that the knowledge of the truth has power in it to produce obedience to the truth.

Now it is acknowledged by all thinkers that mere knowledge is not enough for action, that no desire to *do* a thing ever follows immediately on knowing that a thing can be done. Most certainly knowledge is necessary. We cannot possibly desire anything

of which we know nothing. We must know before we desire; but the desire to read a book does not spring directly from the fact that we know there is a book which can be read, nor does a younger son set out for a far country merely because he has been told of its existence. The fact must awaken feeling before desire arises leading to action. I must be connected by some link to the external object, event, or person, be the object my own salvation, be the Person even God Himself, before I can be moved or influenced by them. The link that connects me is a *feeling*. By our feelings or interests we are drawn or repelled. When our Lord says that if He be lifted up, He will draw all men to Him, He is saying that they will yet see in Him "a good" that promises to satisfy their souls; their hearts will go out to Him because they believe that all their needs will be supplied by Him, and in Him all their restlessness will come to rest.

Success in religious work is success *in directing the desires of men on God*. And that in practice means the presenting of God to men in such a way that they will find Him attractive, will see Him to be "a good." To adapt the words of Genesis concerning an act of yielding to a very different entreaty, it is when we see God to be good, and pleasant, and One to be desired, that we yield ourselves to Him. That is the characteristic of a desire. It is more than a wish, for a wish is not strong enough to overcome obstacles, as, for example, when a man wishes he could read Russian, but cannot put himself to the trouble of learning it, or knows he does not possess the necessary talent. When, however, a man *desires*,

he puts his heart into it, and is willing to pay the price it will cost in continued effort. What was previously a mere object of cold knowledge has now become a living end or aim or purpose. It is "a good," but a good into the attaining of which he now puts his heart, and his whole heart. We see it in the Psalmist when he breaks out: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after"; or when St. Paul expresses almost the same thought: "One thing I do, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We have said that desire is a vast world. There is no object or person which may not become the centre of it; there is not a day in which we do not find it moving from one thing to another, holding to one only for a little, and clinging passionately to another for years. It is wide as the Universe, high as heaven, deep as hell. And this world of desire is in every man's heart. Just on that account it differs infinitely from the instinct of animals. In man it unites itself with reason, and thereby becomes a partaker of his infinite nature. Thus it is able to make the Eternal God its aim, or, missing Him, find its end in eternal shame. If for a time we can forget the vital importance of human life and become mere spectators of how men are led and shaped and driven by desire, we cannot help being amazed on the one hand at their littleness, and on the other at their transcendent worth; man is a worm, he is crowned with glory and honour—he is as the beasts that perish, he is a son of God. All this, moreover, is the work of desire, so trivial and little observed at its

beginning, so potent and seemingly irresistible at the end. But perhaps we can deal with the subject more easily if we take it first as it works out for evil, and then for good.

In judging our fellowmen, and in trying to help those who have lost their way in life, we must never forget how heavily biassed some are by nature towards sin; and (what is even more important) how badly trained they have been, or rather how efficiently trained for wickedness. Not only has the good in them been neglected, but evil has been inculcated, nursed by example, encouraged by word and by the amusement their evil ways have caused. Even in good homes, and under the training of those whose intentions are the very best, the results are sometimes deplorable. One ought not to try to apportion blame, for the will is determined by many factors which are too subtle for us. But there is one way of setting the will on evil which good men often overlook in their earnestness. The will may be determined by aversion, by resilience. We may by our piety very easily produce not piety, or, on the other hand, a liking for evil, but a distaste for good. In splitting a gnarled log of wood by means of iron wedges, skill is needed, for the very eagerness to drive the wedge home may give rise to the flinging of the wedge out. This is the lesson which good men sometimes find hard to follow. Men of the world can drop a word into the heart of one they wish to capture—and wait. In our Lord's handling of men there does not seem to have been that eagerness and urgency and taking the soul with a rush, which mark the work of some of His followers. He

sowed His seed quietly, with a trustfulness in its power, and in the hunger of man's heart. At any rate, it is only too familiar that the zeal and fervency of many Christian men and their belief in "quick returns" have repelled those who would have been won by gentler ways. Force shatters where a sympathetic word subdues. In the ministry of Christ's word, we are not out of the need of Æsop's fable of the Wind and the Sun. Besides, even if we were able to force the desires, and with them the will, we should only succeed in making of our converts not free men but drudges.

The painful thought about the desire of evil is the rapid yet almost imperceptible way in which it develops and asserts a subtle mastery over our thoughts and imaginations. We shall speak presently of the conflict of desires, and the way which that competition opens up for our escape from sin; but we are thinking just now of a life in which sin has come to reign. The desire of it grows by yielding, although the very opposite seems to be the truth; for immediately on yielding, the desire disappears. It disappears for the moment, and we are apparently free to think dispassionately of the very desire to which we have yielded. We can disapprove of it, condemn it, repent of it; but we are at the moment of our condemning it more its slaves than we were before yielding. The cure needs something deeper than yielding. Back the desire will come, reinforced by the last indulgence—with the accumulated power of all its earlier successes; and it will return to attack a will that has been weakened by every case of yielding. The eye tends to become blind to what is

everywhere around and the heart to the growing power of a familiar sin. In this way we may surrender our whole moral strength without perceiving it, and quickly become the helpless menials of a sin we at first loathed.

Within the circle of a great passion, there may be revolving a hundred other desires, stronger and weaker. But as the years pass by, many of these desires exercise less influence over us, and we tend to give our strength to one only. The heart concentrates on one mastering desire. Under its sway a man does not necessarily outrage his family, or break through the conventions of his time; it is present in many a life which is outwardly decent enough. Not only in sins of the flesh, but in the subtler sins of the mind, and in what St. Paul calls spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, we can detect the overmastering power of a single desire. Let us recall what we have read of revenge working in a savage, or resentment in an educated mind. We need no word to reveal to us to-day what havoc vaulting ambition and the love of supremacy will work throughout the wide earth; or to come to the lesser matters of our own experience, let us reflect how men may become a pest by clever, cynical, bitter speech. Why do the Psalms so often complain to God of men's tongues? We know.

But at present we are thinking of the sinner's own degradation; and it is this, that, as his sin develops through the years, it stains and corrupts his whole thinking and imagination. It is always in the background of his mind. He may bend his attention to business or to chess, as the archer bends his bow;

but when the tension is released and his thought is free, back comes the sin. It intrudes into his reading and his conversation, it rules his estimate of his fellowmen. "Every man has his price," he says, "although his price is not always money." Or he says: "The good are those who have never had the right kind of offer." The degradation of men who talk in that way lies in this, that they do not *discern* goodness, they do not believe in virtue. Therefore they rage against churches and priests and parsons because the moral law which these stand for obstructs their way. Even when they are politicians, it is not their fellowmen they love, but their party. In the strong and pregnant words of Browning's Cavalier they might say:

"Hampden to hell; and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!"

Flinging morality and all fear of consequences aside, with the bit in their teeth, they take their leap and plunge.

What a miserable condition! What a tragic end! Yet it all began in a natural desire, harboured and dallied with. "If only thou hadst known in thy day the things that belonged to thy peace; but they were hid from thine eyes."

CHAPTER XIII

The Conflict of Desires

AT the opening of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine, addressing God, uses these impressive words so familiar to us all: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts can find no rest until they rest in Thee." All the great writers of the Christian faith have competed with one another in their affirmation of the deep truth that God has so stamped Himself upon us that not even sin can obliterate the mark. Calvin says: That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God Himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, *has endued all men* with some idea of His Godhead, the memory of which He constantly renews and occasionally enlarges. . . . Since, then, there never has been from the very first any quarter of the globe, any city, any household even, without religion, this amounts to a tacit confession, that *a sense of Deity is inscribed on every heart.*" Once again he says in the same chapter: "All men of sound judgment will therefore hold that a sense of Deity is indelibly engraven on the human heart, and that this belief is naturally engendered in all, and thoroughly fixed as it were in our bones——" All men, then, are to that extent, and by their very constitution, spiritual

beings. Nothing in their history can change that fact.

It may be said, and has been said, that sin has changed it, that man by the fall has lost his spiritual nature, and that there has ensued "the corruption of his whole nature." Does not St. Paul say, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"? It is true, the man who does not exercise his spiritual power loses it, so that he may cease to care for divine truth and may even come to loathe it. Yet Christian thinkers admit that secular-minded men have many admirable qualities, and are sometimes patterns to Christians in public and private life. They have not infrequently stood out for Christian virtues, when the Church of Christ has proved unfaithful. What is meant by sin corrupting the whole of human nature? It can only mean that since the spirit of man is one whole, the whole is injured when injury is done to any part. The old theory that the mind consists of several faculties which are separate from one another and can be isolated has been abandoned as false. The mind or spirit is a whole, and what were called "faculties" are aspects or activities of the one compact mind; and therefore to neglect any side or activity of it is to injure all. How simple that truth is, and how profoundly sad. As Milton said, evil living is *mental* deterioration. Who can doubt it that remembers the lives of some of our poets? Take Burns and Byron, whose imagination became tainted, whose feelings were "petrified," as one of them confesses.

Or take Coleridge, who wrecked his will, and consequently left more work projected yet unattempted than perhaps any of our great writers. The whole mental equipment of such men, we might say, was impaired by their self-indulgence. It tainted (we shall not say corrupted) their whole nature.

On the other hand, in the same way and by the same law, the awakening of a strong desire for some worthy end in the life of the careless will quicken and strengthen the whole inner man. Burns's love of his home and of his country pulled him together from time to time, and Byron's devotion to Greece seems even now to redeem his powers. There is no man of us who has not felt this. A new interest (and interest is but a form of desire) will gird again the energies of one who is slackening in every fibre of him; and he will find, after he has given himself for a term to the new interest, that his old interests and his old capacity for work have revived. We like to think that the immense social effort of our generation among the young and the unchurchly is their pleasant prelude to a Christian life. Let us observe also that if the presence of a sinful bias in us leads inevitably to the corruption of our whole nature, so will the presence of a spiritual bias tend to the spiritualising of our whole nature. And this is certainly true. If a "sense of the Deity is engraven indelibly on our hearts," then every part of our thinking is to some extent affected. If sin cannot erase it, the path for the return of a sinner is kept open. Appeal can be made to him, and although the natural man cannot understand all that

the spirit means, no man is so utterly "natural" that he is beyond salvation.

But there is something finer than the recovery of the lapsed, viz., the securing from the start of those who have not lapsed. Why should we not capture the desires of our young people in their earliest years, and lay up in their memories happy associations and presuppositions that will keep the way open for God? Thomas Traherne, a poet and a contemporary of Milton, tells in his *Centuries of Meditations* of the divine light which accompanied him in his childhood and youth. He says that the divine light with which he was born and the conceptions he early acquired enabled him to read the Universe as nothing else ever did.

"By the gift of God they attended me into the world," he writes, "and by His special favour I remember them now. Verily they seem the greatest gifts His wisdom could bestow, for without them all other gifts had been dead and vain. They are unattainable by book, and therefore I will teach them by experience. Pray for them earnestly; for they will make you angelical and wholly celestial. Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world than I when I was a child."

Traherne then gives in some detail, and in his own glorious prose, an account of these early impressions. Although few young people, however trained, would see such visions (for he was a poet) any more than they would learn to write such English, yet there are none without their vision, and there are tens of thousands of them whose visions

of happiness are intertwined with thoughts of goodness and of God. This was what he saw.

“All appeared new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. I was a little stranger which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. My knowledge was Divine. I knew by intuition those things which since my Apostasy I collected again by the highest reason. My very ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one brought into the Estate of Innocence. All things were spotless and pure and glorious: yea, and infinitely mine, and joyful and precious. I knew not that there were any sins, or complaints, or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions, or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. Everything was at rest, free, and immortal. I was entertained like an Angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory, I saw all in the peace of Eden; Heaven and Earth did sing my Creator’s praises, and could not make more melody to Adam than to me. All time was Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange that an infant should be heir of the whole World, and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold? The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and the stones of the street were as precious as gold; the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. . . . Eternity was manifest in the light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared, which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The

streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins, and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no selfish possession, nor bounds, nor divisions; but all possessions and divisions were mine: all treasures and the possessors of them."

To this description of the joy and glory of his early life, Traherne adds that it needed much ado to corrupt him and teach him "the dirty divices of the world." "Which now I unlearn," he tells us, "and become, as it were, a little child again that I may enter into the Kingdom of God." The corrupting of a mind like that followed a course familiar to all of us: no one spoke of those glories he saw in the world, but of gain and dress and possession and trivialities. The light in him was eclipsed

"by the customs and manners of men; by an innumerable company of other objects, rude, vulgar, and valueless things; by the impetuous torrent of wrong desires in all others whom I saw or knew that carried me away and alienated me from it; and finally by the evil influence of a bad education that did not foster and cherish it. All men's thoughts and words were about other matters. They all prized things which I did not dream of. I was little and revered their authority; I was weak and easily guided by their example; ambitious also, and desirous to approve myself unto them. And finding no one syllable in any man's mouth of those things, by degrees they vanished, my thoughts were blotted out; and at last all the celestial, great, and stable treasures to which I was born as wholly forgotten as if they had never been."

In reading these words we cannot but recall Wordsworth's Ode, which speaks of the memories of things which now we see no more, of a glory which has passed away from the earth.

“Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?”

But this is the contention of Traherne (holding as he did to the ordinary doctrine of the corruption of our nature), “that our misery proceedeth ten thousand times more from the outward bondage of opinion and custom than from any inward corruption or depravation of Nature; and that it is not our parents’ loins, so much as our parents’ lives that enthrall and blind us.” In our modern speech he would say that when we stray it is not because of a bad heredity but through our choice of a bad example. He testifies “in the presence of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ I cannot remember but that *I was ten thousand times more prone to good and excellent things than evil*. But I was quickly tainted and fell by others.”

Whether we accept that as a fair statement of the average experience of boys or not, we know that to all of them at last there comes a day of choice between the good and the evil. We are dealing at present with one whose desires are set Godward, and who finds himself face to face with something which holds him back or draws him downward. He is tempted; but tempted, drawn away—“beguiled and allured”—by his own desires. How far he will yield will depend upon his character, upon

the force of the temptation or upon the many subtle influences that are constantly playing upon the mind. He now knows what is meant by the conflict of desires, so vividly described by St. Paul when he sets the spirit against the flesh. The flesh is a quasi-personification of the secular life in which pride, strife, temper, sects and the sectarian spirit, rivalry, envy and suchlike have their place. This flesh, the apostle says, shows an eager, even passionate desire to master the spirit, and the spirit an equally eager and passionate desire to master the flesh, with the result, he says, that we are not free to act as we please. And certainly at the beginning of a temptation this alternation of good and evil is the general experience. No sooner does the sinful suggestion present itself to the mind than there springs up the moral alternative—at least where the sin has not become a habit—and for a short interval there will be a swaying to and fro, to the thought of the sin and away from it, to God and back again to the attractiveness of the sin. What determines the issue of the conflict? *We* do—we ourselves do by attention. We have only to look steadily at either the good or the evil, and it will hold the field. It will occupy more and more of the field of thought, until at last and very soon the other disappears.

But the conflict may be one not between God and sin, but between God and suffering. There is the natural and instinctive desire to avoid pain or the giving of pain, which will start up, barring the way to duty. One day the alternatives will be duty or the loss of a situation, or of a friend, or of a ca-

reer. Another day it will be the Will of God or death. The whole range of life indeed is the arena of this conflict. Nor is there anything unworthy in the fact that it has come upon us. It came upon our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, and with Him it was a conflict of desires as it is now with us. He had seen men crucified, had heard them shriek in agony as He hurried away; He felt the unutterable burden of men's sins that had brought Him to this pass; and He prayed the Father that if it were possible He might not have the cup to drink. But, on the other hand, He felt that there was no way of escape; He was in the grip of His own countrymen, who were cruel and malignant, and many of whom were convinced they were doing God service in clearing Him out of the way; moreover He was in the grip of Rome, careless and callous; and above all, He knew there was no means of breaking down the enmity of men against God, or giving free course to the love of God for them, but by His death. Therefore He prayed, "Thy will not mine, be done." But why did the conflict return upon Him when He found the three disciples asleep? Was His isolation—One man against the world—a part of the agony; and had He counted on their sympathy and prayers? Their apparent indifference, at any rate, to His struggle turned His attention once more away from God to the agony of the cross. The oscillation of His mind proves to us the intensity of His feeling and the awfulness of His conception of the death He must die.

This intensity of conflict (although springing from very different sources) is not uncommon in the ex-

perience of Christian men. They have painful convictions of their sin and unworthiness, of God's judgment, and the possibility that He may withdraw His grace; they are once more uncertain of their spiritual condition, and, although not afraid of final condemnation, they are ashamed of their past and are degraded in their own eyes; they know what their fellowmen would say of them if they knew all, what then will God say who does know?—what must He *think* of them even while He forgives? We ask then, what is this feeling of desertion and desolation in the minds of good men?

To get an answer to that we must observe that the conflict is entirely within the soul, and is possible within the soul because a man is a complex being, and (in a sense) many men in one. Even the plainest working man is infinitely more than a working man (a truth which the well-to-do find it hard to remember); he is the son of parents who loved him, he is a husband, a father who loves his children as tenderly and proudly as a nobleman; he is a politician, a churchman, a Christian worker, a lover of books or of mountains. These leanings or passions of his will often come into collision. His politics may endanger his employment, his love of books may threaten to withdraw him from his work in a mission, and so on through the whole reach of life. How will he decide? Some will answer: From the strongest motive. But that would imply that the motives were not a part of his whole nature, whereas they are but an evidence of what the man in himself is. His strongest motive, say the love of books, would not be the strongest motive of his foreman.

And why is it *his* strongest? Because he is the man he is. Judas would have had no conflict among the olive-trees of Gethsemane. The strength of a desire is the measure of the strength of the moral realm within him. The conflict of desires within a man is his conflict with himself, not with some object external to him. The external object has only wakened anew some old element of his nature which had become quiescent. The contending desires are not foreigners that have intruded into a field not their own; they are not combatants in a country which is neutral. The field is ours, is indeed our soul, and we are in the fight. As Hegel says: "I am not one of the combatants, but rather both of the combatants and also the combat itself."

Now, just this fact that we are ourselves both of the combatants is the promise of our victory. If we have by our own thoughts brought the conflict into being, then by our own thought we can bring it to a happy end. Nevertheless we are apt to misapprehend the part we can play. The danger of the conflict to a Christian man is in thinking that he can settle it by conflict—by the application of some force he can bring to bear against his temptation. The love of the world and the love of the Father are at variance within him, and he is apt to imagine that his deliverance will come by turning his attention to the enemy and with might and main driving it forth. But the contest is in reality a contest for securing the Christian's attention. To attend to the sin is to reinforce it. To attend to God is to open the heart to Him, and thus to bring Him into the battle. The subtlest and most per-

sistent of our mistakes in warring with our unworthy desires is the belief that we have only our own strength at our disposal. Christ's method is the true method. Back into the solitude of the garden, and face to face with the Fountainhead of all spiritual power, we open our mind and heart to God. He comes, and with Him come security and peace.

CHAPTER XIV

From Bondage to Freedom

CHRISTIAN religion sets a mark before its adherents and urges them to press toward it continually. The mark, as St. Paul expresses it, is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But that fact is one of the main difficulties which Christianity encounters in the minds of man. The mark, they say, is too high. It makes demands on them which human nature can hardly be expected to meet, and though some elect souls do meet them, the man of affairs, busy at all times, and with a mind necessarily preoccupied, has not leisure to be (as the phrase goes) "an earnest Christian." The young, moreover, with life opening up before them in all its rich promise, can hardly be expected to take kindly to a religion whose motto is the cross, whose demand is a self-denial that may involve the cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. There is no denying the beauty of the Christian character, as it is portrayed in the New Testament. The very enemies of our faith have most willingly admitted that; but the objection to it is that it would require a man's whole time to attain to excellence in it, and that only a few are so constituted as to attain excellence even at that cost. Only consider, they say, what virtues have to be practised,

what duties have to be performed, what worthy and honourable interests and pursuits have to be foregone; human nature would require to be immolated before the Christian standard could be reached.

Now, it must be admitted that religion tends to take the form of demands and requirements, of virtues and duties; and although, as we shall now seek to show, this is not at all true of the Christian religion, it is well to state the view. Christianity, as every one knows, sprang out of the Jewish religion, and at the very beginning of its history was represented as an heretical departure from the revelation of Moses. The scribes and priests persecuted it because it proved to be careless of some of their laws. For Mosaism was a system of laws and regulations, and to be careless of them was, as they were convinced, to be careless of God. Coming from such an origin the early Christians naturally brought with them a reverence for these laws and regulations: were they not the laws of God? And besides, they argued, what else can religion do than give guidance to believers, and lay down a course of action that will preserve them from moral disaster?

The answer to all this is that Christianity, as interpreted by St. Paul, has nothing to do with laws and regulations. It demands no virtues and prescribes no duties. All the while, it is aiming at the highest perfection of character and life—nothing less than the perfection of God and the likeness of Christ, and thereby at the fulfilment of all moral and spiritual demands made by God or man. It claims to have the secret of how the perfect life can be lived. But the path to it is not that of obeying command-

ments and the keeping of rules. The Christian does not screw himself up to the fulfilment of hard tasks, or to the fighting against a hundred unseen enemies, or the killing out of a hundred natural impulses, or even one. His ultimate goal is the holiness of God; but God is not reached by fighting, or climbing, or killing off his natural affections. Do not let us be shocked at this as if it were immoral; St. Paul was the last man in the world to lower the standard of morality; his whole endeavour was to lift morality to a higher level.

The apostle to the Gentiles—to men who had not inherited the legal system of the Jews—had the battle of this paradox to fight, and he fought it to a finish. By fighting it he saved Christianity from being an obscure sect of the Jews. But it seems the battle has to be fought age after age.

“Freedom’s battle once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft is ever won.”

From time to time the old battle and the apostle’s victory are forgotten; men slip down from liberty to legalism, from the joyful service of sons to the obedience of slaves.

St. Paul in the thick of his struggle flashed out one of those penetrating sentences of his which go to the heart of things. Here it is, Romans x. 4: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” It looks harmless enough as it stands in the Authorised Version, nor is it clearer in the Revised Version. What does it mean?

St. Paul in the preceding verse has been contrasting the two ways of obtaining righteousness, *i.e.* acquittal before God as the start of a perfect life—the one by faith, and the other by means of keeping laws. Then comes verse 4, “Christ is the end of law,” *i.e.* has brought about the termination of law; *Christ has put an end to law.*¹

In Colossians ii. 14 he puts the same truth in another way: “Christ has blotted out the bond retained in ordinances—hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.” Christ has killed law—not merely Mosaic ceremonies and sacrifices, but also all kinds of law: ceremonies most certainly, as a means of reaching out to God; and as certainly, moral laws as a means of attaining pardon and perfection.

Here and there one meets with writings of eminent men in which Christianity is described as a higher and purer morality than the world had hitherto seen. This, they say, is its distinction. In their view God is still making moral demands upon us, and judging us according to our compliance with them or not. For example, in a short study of Cardinal Newman by the Rev. Alfred Fawkes, reference is made to this:

“His [Newman’s] mission, as he conceived it, was one of relentless war against liberalism in thought that was breaking up ancient institutions in church and state, and would not cease from its work until it had destroyed religion. There have been times when it seemed to be so; when good men have distrusted learning because a little

¹Principal Denney in Art. “Law” in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible*.

learning has proved a dangerous thing. But the remedy has been not retreat but advance; not less but more knowledge—that two-fold faith which has been described as ‘faith in criticism and faith in God.’ If it is too much to say that Newman never attained to either, it is certain that he never succeeded in uniting the two. Evangelical as his early training had been, he looked at Evangelical religion from without. The terrors of the law held him. He believed, but ‘joy and peace in believing’ were not his. In his sermons fear is a more prominent motive than love; God is presented rather as a centre of dogma than as a loving Father; the Gospel is not so much a messenger of salvation as a menace of judgment to come. He looked at Christianity as a creed—which it is not; and demanded from it a system—which it does not possess. It was all or nothing. Protestantism ‘is but the inchoate state or stage of a doctrine, and its final resolution is in Rationalism’; the conception of religion as a vital process, a thing living in and with the life of the race and the individual, was one which he never reached.”

This freedom from the fear of breaking God’s commandments or of not fulfilling the duties which He requires of us is the freedom which St. Paul has brought to men. In Dr. Macgregor’s words concerning him:

“He now knew the joy of thinking thoughts, and giving himself up to sentiments and energies which were his own. His life ran out untrammelled, with nothing of mere imitation about it. This freedom from men brought others with it, for when a man is right he is much more right than he thinks; he had freedom in God’s presence also; for fear had gone, and life and Sonship had taken its place. God no longer talked to him as a master, issuing bare com-

mands, but as a friend. And there was freedom from sin; for though he was not yet done with it the fetters seemed broken, and, running in the way of God's commandments, he was leaving the life of servitude behind."

This difference is finely brought out in the apostle's expression: "The law was a school-master to bring us to Christ." "The school-master" referred to was a tutor, not a teacher. Nor was he one who conducted the boy to and from school, although he might do that too. He was a slave who watched the boy, walked with him, nudged him, warned, checked, corrected him, pulled him up, pouring out endless little admonitions about his behaviour. How intolerable that must have become as the boy grew into manhood, and how glad he must have been to escape from it. That was St. Paul's figure for the law. The law had been that kind of tutor to the apostle, and could be nothing more to the soul. Escape from it came to the apostle in friendship with Christ, and comes to us all through Him. And this freedom was joy.

But what of the perfect life? It is attained and can be attained only in a spirit, a personal devotion, a love for God. At the heart of this Universe, in all its majesty and mystery, there resides, not a moral imperative which we must at our peril obey, but a Holy Father whom it is our joy to please, and who helps us in our efforts to please Him, and in our failures. As the prophet said: "The law" must be written "in the heart"; so that the good life is not something imposed upon us from without, but the walking in a way that is our own as well as God's. Our trust in God, our attachment to

Him, has made us one in heart and mind with Him, and we are at home with Him as sons are with their father.

This identification of a man with a law which is above him, and at the same time within him, is familiar enough; as, for instance, in the work of an artist. An artist does not walk or talk or judge nature by a system of artistic rules, he does not pull himself up from time to time with warnings, such as: "But I must be artistic!" "That was scarcely in keeping with my art." He is artistic by nature, thinks his own thoughts quite naturally, and they reveal the artist. He no more assumes it than a happy man assumes happiness, pinching himself and saying: "Now show happiness." The artist thinks in terms of colour and beauty, and sees them in sunrise and sunset, in brown fields and grey mists.

In exactly this way the possession of the spirit of Christ changes us into the likeness of Christ. Kindness is not a rule of duty which we Christians are on the watch to observe. It is the glad spontaneous impulse of a heart that has experienced the kindness of Christ. We no more put on a love for God in obedience to an order (we could not if we tried), than we put on love for our children because strangers are present. Christianity is a spirit, continually growing in power within the Christian mind, advancing and applying itself to all the vicissitudes of life. It lays hold of the man who surrenders himself to it, it lifts him out of the thralldom of sin and the slavish fear of sinning, and moulds him and his whole activity with delight into the likeness of Christ.

CHAPTER XV

From Freedom to Bondage Again

THERE is an apparent contradiction in the apostle of freedom boasting of the fact that he has after all made a slave of himself, a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. He had been freed from all bonds, as we have seen, both outward and inward. He would allow no man to fetter him in conduct or thought; he would not be bound by any system however ancient or sacred. He was a free man and must remain free. No custom, ritual, or commandment had any claim on his obedience. So he maintained. Yet we find him calling himself a bond-slave of Jesus Christ, and boasting of it. He takes the figure of a Roman triumph, the conquering general conducting a great procession in which are exhibited the trophies of his victories, and hundreds of prisoners who will now be the bond-slaves of Rome. And the apostle speaks of himself as one of these prisoners, marching in the eyes of all observers in the train of his Conqueror. He had surrendered himself, ceased to be himself, and was no longer his own; and his bond-service to Christ was his pride.

In the times of the New Testament there was no independent working class who gave their labour for wages, changing their masters when they chose.

The workers were slaves, the property of their masters, who had the disposal, often the absolute disposal, of their bodies and souls. Obedience was their great virtue, to obey any kind of orders their simple duty. They had no rights of their own. Very frequently they were comfortable, had good homes and abundant food; when they had ability, they were educated by their masters and became teachers, or physicians, or trusted friends. Why should they complain? With all these advantages, the loss of liberty counted for little, many of them reasoned.

Whatever comforts a slave may enjoy there is one thing that may well gall him—he is a prisoner; he cannot live his life according to his own thought of what it should be. And yet that slavery is what this apostle of freedom now seemed to rejoice in. He won his freedom only to surrender it. To understand this we must remind ourselves of what the slavery was from which he had been delivered.

St. Paul had not lived a wicked life, although he counted himself the chief of sinners. We have his own testimony to the fact that he had been blameless in the eyes of the law. Nevertheless he knew what this inward slavery to a law was. He had been burdened by the demands of conscience, by the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of something above and outside of himself. He had a fear, a dread of God, as of a master watching him and ready to blame him for every fault. His spiritual life was a life of drudgery. He spent his days in a vain endeavour to satisfy God, as God had been presented to him in his religion. Above all things

he was anxious to be a good man, and to find his pleasure in doing good; but he failed, because at every turn he saw his defects, the "works of righteousness" or goodness which he had done being marred in the doing. At last he had been set free.

And this was the mark of his freedom; that it had come to him through his accepting Christ whose followers he had hounded to death. This Jesus whom he had hated was the Son of God, who had humbled Himself to become a man like the poorest of them, had suffered all manner of evil, and had died the infamous death of crucifixion—in all this persuading men of the love of the Father for them. "The Son of God," he breaks out in his letter to the Galatians, "who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." It was a personal relation between Christ and him, he was persuaded—a much closer and more intimate relation than any moral law, or principle of behaviour, or any national custom could establish. Christ had come to him as one individual to another, and had dealt with him in the most intimate way, soul to soul. In accepting Christianity, he had accepted not a religion, but a Friend who had saved him—completely set him free.

This freedom was accompanied by a new spirit, by an outburst of gratitude and joy. He was always finding some new reason for thanking God, or praising Christ. His sense of deliverance never grew faint or slackened. The experience had been so startling that he continued to wonder at it, and to pour out his thanksgiving to Christ for what He had done. Now, this gratitude brought with it a deep devotion for his Saviour, and an unwearied

enthusiasm for His cause. Devotion and enthusiasm always carry a man out of himself, lifting him above himself, and above anything he ever conceived possible in himself. It was so with St. Paul. He was no longer himself, he tells us, but another man entirely. It was not the old mind and spirit that ruled him, but Christ. When he thought of the old life which he had lived before he knew Christ (although it had been morally blameless), he would say to himself: "I am not free to do that; I am bound to my Master; I am now engaged to serve Christ." He uses the language of the slave-market in speaking of the relation of Christian men to their Lord: "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "The love of Christ constraineth us," *i.e.* the love which Christ has manifested for us in dying to save us constrains us, and this is the result, that we for whom He died no longer live for ourselves, but must live for Him. His devotion for us has awakened in our hearts a corresponding devotion for Him.

The devotion and enthusiasm of which we have been speaking are the source and fountain-head of a life like Christ's. A great devotion transforms men, fashioning them into its own likeness. This is the secret of Christ. He came to win men's attachment to Himself and to His Father, knowing that that would elevate them to His fellowship and purify them from their selfishness. Men have often been surprised that He called the weary and the heavy laden to have faith in Him rather than in God; but there is this human reason for it, besides others, that it is a personal affection that grips the

spirits of men. Faith in Him, He knew, would save men from sin, because the heart that loved Him would become so occupied with Him—with His life, His cause, His purposes, His thoughts, that there would be no room for sin, no time for sin. Just so strongly, indeed, does St. John express it: "Who-soever abideth in Him sinneth not." Devotion of this kind carries all before it, enabling men to pluck up trees and remove mountains, as our Lord tells us; in other words, to accomplish the impossible, and work miracles: "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do." It is remarkable enough to observe how insuperable difficulties are overcome by those who believe they *can* be overcome, and how they melt away and disappear. This has certainly been the case in the spiritual world. Heroisms and martyrdoms are proofs of it. And character is another proof. In the region of character, the transformations that have been worked by a faith that they *could* be worked have been astounding. Romance cannot die out so long as Christ remains and there are souls to save, for He will deliver them. He will continue to deliver them in strange ways from slaveries of every kind. To understand His power to-day we have only to read a little of what He has done in the past among men and women who have never been thought of as martyrs or counted in any degree heroic. There are romances in plenty in our streets and in our homes: in the quiet endurance of suffering, the bearing up against the contempt of those who think themselves our betters, the courage of the poor—their overcoming of tempta-

tion, and the endless frets of life—the deeds of heroism at the front or at the fireside are more than can be numbered. But we know this of them all, that when Christ comes with His deliverance we shall not count any price we have paid for it too high, or any time we have waited for it too long. A massive joy will lift us above complaint and regret, will empower us to undertake adventures for Christ's sake, to make sacrifices unheard of, to attack and in time to overthrow tyrannies. Nothing seems impossible to us, for the Deliverer still keeps proclaiming that *this* is the acceptable year of the Lord.

A devotion or enthusiasm of this kind may present itself under one or other of two aspects, according as we view it from within or from without. Viewed from without, it is a bondage, a limitation or restraint of one's thought and action. The whole man is engaged and held by the strongest of all emotions; he is said to be enslaved. And certainly there is a circumscribing of his affections, and consequently of his activities. A man's mind is concentrated on a narrow circle of persons and their interests; and in the higher stages of it there is a consecration of the whole being to its object. At first, and in the view of a mere spectator, it is certainly a bondage and a narrowing of life.

It is not, however, the bondage of a slave, for viewed from within it is a liberation. In their affections men *find* themselves, as if their affections were the deepest and truest part of them. And this is in the main true. The intellect is always on the search, goes ever deeper and deeper in seeking the

explanation of things, and ever wider and wider in its grasp of them. Intellect is in the nature of it without rest. The affections, on the other hand, when they settle down, find rest at once. The stronger the affection is, the deeper the peace. It asks for nothing else, it needs nothing else. This one, it says, is all in all to me. Now, if this is bondage, it is also freedom, for the man has attained to something which produces an abiding harmony of his whole inward nature. In purely human relationships it is usual to point to the love of a woman for her child as the finest example of it. It takes possession of her whole life, concentrating all her attention and interest on one person; she seeks the child's presence, and finds her highest and purest joy there; absence on some imperative engagement she considers an interruption, and when it is finished she returns to the child with satisfaction. There is an urgency in this affection, an intensity, and a power of absorbing the mind, heart, and will at their best, which can be matched by one thing only. It is matched, and even excelled, by the love of Christ in the lives of saints. The love of Christ does not perhaps excel natural love in urgency and eagerness; it is calmer, because it has for its object the Eternal. The two, however, have this in common that they need nothing else, no one else; they have no room in their heart for a competing affection.

This seems very narrowing, and often enough at first it is so. But very soon it is discovered to be liberating in the highest degree. There is not a woman who has loved her own child in this narrow

and intense way, who has not also loved all children, and found her heart go out to every motherless child. According to the degree of its intensity her love narrows her—at first; but to the same degree will it broaden her, giving her a touch of the comprehensive love of the Heavenly Father. Now the same holds true of a Christian's love of Christ. It may narrow some lives, as every one has seen; yet on further acquaintance we find that their narrowness is not due merely to intellectual defect, but is also due to intensity of spiritual conviction, and often to their anxiety to save others from danger and bring them into joy and peace. However, it is not the enslaving of a Christian by his Christianity that strikes one, but his liberation from the narrowness and blight of a selfish life. His eye becomes generosity and his whole life is full of light. He is generous in his judgment of others, in his construction of their motives, in his gifts to the needy, in his service of the down-trodden.

There is a transforming power in a devotion such as that of a Christian to Christ; it seems to create within him a new life, which, as we have seen, is after all his own life. In every one, the poorest and meanest and worst of men, there is the possibility of something great, at least of something greater than anything he has ever done before. There are little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love in every Christian life which are as surely recorded in the book of God's remembrance as the flaming actions the world will not forget; for they are serving the Almighty and Omniscient God, with whom no good deed is either lost

or forgotten, who changes our defeats into spiritual gain, our patience into hope, our regrets into security for the coming days. Even when we blunder, we are liberated from the fear that He will upbraid us for our blunders, or ever neglect to take our will for the deed. We are His slaves, and yet we are His friends; and it is our joy therefore to live and work for One who is so worthy, so gracious, and so willing to accept what little we can do for His cause. We are Christ's freemen, and we shake ourselves free from the fear of men, the petty tyrannies of a home or a workroom, the miserable feeling that we are neglected or not understood or worthless. We are called to be free from everything within us and without that hinders, mars, or defeats Christ's work in the soul or in the congregation or in the nation. This freedom of access to our Father, this assurance of welcome and appreciation as His children, sheds a glory on our commonplace duties, just as the sun gives glory to land and rivers and trees. No doubt it is in our own thought that people and mean streets and trifling actions are made glorious. But so also would the sun shine in vain for us on rivers and land and trees if they did not become thoughts to us. "The sun in the heavens enlightens the hemisphere," says Traherne, "and the sun in our understanding enlightens the soul. But the world within us is an offering returned to God, infinitely more acceptable to God, since it came from Him that it might return to Him. For God made us able to create worlds in our own mind which are more precious to Him than those which He Himself created." And these

worlds of spiritual thinking are within our reach, stretching out as they do from our doorstep, whether we be rich or poor. Eternal Life is as free to us as it was to St. Paul. The earth and the heavens and all things are ours in Christ. Beyond them, encompassing them, and sustaining them is God—the Creator and Indwelling Soul of all; and He also is ours. We have the freedom of the Father's House. No matter how narrow our home or our sphere in life may be, we shall find it wide enough to embrace heaven, and every duty honestly fulfilled a step towards freedom and God.

CHAPTER XVI

Cowardice and Courage

EARLY in the war there was passed along the lines one day this message: "General — desires the troops to know that Corporal — of the — regiment was found guilty yesterday of cowardice in the face of the enemy, and was shot this morning at five o'clock." It is recorded in the life of Stonewall Jackson, a godly and tender-hearted man, that he would sometimes sentence to death as many as twelve at a time, and that he maintained against the pleadings of his friends that it was the only means of preserving discipline in a volunteer army. It would not be seemly for a civilian to criticise such a military rule; he readily admits that discipline is essential, and that fear (which is exceedingly contagious) would, if it spread, involve an army in disaster. Still, the penalty in his instance was appalling. Let us consider what the cause of fear is.

Most of us know a little about it either in ourselves or in others; few of us know anything more than a little, and very few have known it in extremity. We are all aware how disturbing it is to the nervous system both in men and animals. So long as it lasts it changes the ordinary disposition of old and young, renders gentle people fierce, mad-

dens the most reasonable, drives the weak to flight, and sometimes induces death. Of course, in ordinary cases it produces no such results; but alarm in one man, which would be easily checked at the start, might become dangerous. Children who are timid are generally blamed, attacked, ridiculed for it, by those who do not know what it means, or who do not perceive that they are only developing the trouble by making the child think more about it. In that way cowards are made. Commonly, fear is due to the physical constitution—to a condition which may have been inherited, or brought on by an accident. In some it depends on the state of the heart. The captain of a Cunard liner was once describing to a small company his experience in mid-ocean with twelve hundred souls on board, when on one occasion the engines broke down, causing great alarm. One of the company that heard him asked: "Tell me, captain, not whether you were afraid, but whether your heart beat faster." His answer was: "If my pulse had quickened by one beat per minute, I should have known it was time for me to resign." He added: "I have never once in all my life been in the least afraid." We may then ask whether the man whose heart does quicken should be blamed. The heart and nervous constitution may be permanently changed by a fright in childhood, by some shock in later years, or by some ghastly experience. Very often young people are trained to be cowardly by the mishandling of their parents and teachers. Fear is perhaps the most powerful of all our emotions, and the most easily awakened, and therefore lends itself readily to ap-

peal. It is positively criminal to trade on it as so many speakers do.

Suppose a young man has a weak heart, or is in a low nervous condition, or worn out by sleeplessness or hard work. A moment of danger comes, or a feeling that danger is imminent, and a loud noise bursts on him suddenly, or something in the dusk looms large and vague and menacing. His natural instinct possibly will be to cower down and hide, or, on the other hand, to run. In civil life the refuge of many men in such case is to defend themselves by telling lies. They are taken off their guard, taken by surprise, and before they recover or have time to reason about it, they have spoken the cowardly word or done the cowardly action. A threatening voice or a bullying manner suggests to such people some great and impending danger, or some transgression quite unknown, and the impulse is to take "cover" in a lie or in flight.

One would like to know something of the constitution and early training of Simon Barjona who denied Christ, before passing judgment on him. Our Lord on His first meeting with Simon called him "A rock." Did He see signs of timidity in him even then, and according to His gracious custom try to develop what was lacking in his nature by means of a new name? Simon broke down, to his own deep sorrow, because of the presence of others whose judgment he feared, because of a public opinion which was adverse to him, and because of the dim sense he had of some impending danger. In every direction round him, in the court of the palace, were Roman soldiers moving about; in the uncertain light

of midnight, shadows came and went. There was much talking round the little fires where they gathered for warmth that cold night—men laughing and mocking at this poor, demented Jew, called Jesus, and threatening all manner of evil against His followers. And Peter, who had followed his Master afar off, and now sat, unknown to any one, without speaking a word in Christ's behalf, was suddenly accused of being a disciple by one of the maid-servants. Before he knew what he was doing, he had denied Him, and then plunged on, again and yet again denying Him, with cursing and swearing.

“Shot this morning at five o'clock for cowardice in the face of the enemy!” Fortunately for us and for the world, that was not Simon Peter's fate. Had it been so, it would have proved a blunder of the most tragic kind, for St. Peter became one of the boldest and most daring soldiers in the whole army of Christ. The General of the Christian army came not to clear out the cowards from His ranks, but to make them brave men. To make them brave, He treats them as already brave: and by giving them each a new name lifts them steadily out of the cowardice and meanness and unworthiness of their earlier years into the fortitude and valour of men.

What, then, is courage, which is so essential for the work of Christ? To begin with, it is the conscious facing of danger. There is no courage in passing through a danger of which we are not aware. To be unconscious of it may be most desirable, but no one would claim that on that account he was courageous, nor would he apply the name to another in a similar situation. Nor, again, is a man cour-

ageous who is so carried away by anger or fury or other excitement that he cares not what he does. True enough, anger and excitement may blot out all feeling of fear; but so would alcohol. We might say that such a man was fearless, but we should never call him brave.

Before a man deserves the name of courageous, the danger must be present in his mind, and also the knowledge that there is something which he might well be afraid of. There is risk to be run, and he understands that evil may spring upon him at any moment. He is conscious of the fact, is on the watch, and keenly aware of the dangerous situation. In addition to this he acts without flurry, facing the danger and coping with it. His reason is fully awake, and taking the risks he calmly directs all his actions to a clearly perceived end. Among the finest instances of true courage that modern life experiences is that of doctors who live in a plague-stricken district and work as if there were no plague. As we are seeing constantly to-day, our soldiers calmly take the risks of a battle and fight without flinching for the liberties of their native land. And in like manner the admiral of a flag-ship leads his fleet into the heart of the fleet of the enemy and stands directing all the work as if it were a review day.

Courage, then, means self-control; and self-control may be as finely manifested in a public meeting where the audience is in opposition to the views of the speaker, or in a workshop where a man stands up for honesty of labour among slackers, for sobriety among drinkers, for Christ among unbelievers.

So also was it manifested in this same St. Peter a few months later, when he defied the whole court of the Sanhedrim and its threats. Then he took risks—faced imprisonment fully conscious, faced his chance of death—and he faced them quietly.

Above all, let us look at Christ, who realised fully the danger He ran in teaching as He taught, and who, rising above the plots and the threats of the leaders of the church, went on teaching. Let us look at Him when He rebuked this disciple of His for attempting to discourage Him in facing the cross; or in Gethsemane where He prayed and conquered, and finally said to His disciples, "Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

"Shot this morning at five o'clock!" The thing that makes that punishment so terrible is the thought that that young fellow was possibly a brave man, or at least had the making of one in him. The very bravest men sometimes tremble; Christ was shaken to the heart in Gethsemane. And many of His followers who were at one time timid have learned courage. The author of the song, "Home, Sweet Home," was a very timid lad, especially in the dark; but he was so ashamed of his timidity that he determined to be rid of it; so, choosing a dark night, he walked into the churchyard and set himself down upon one of the tombstones. The perspiration was running from his forehead, and he was trembling in every inch of him. But there he sat until he became calm. That was courage in the midst of fear. The timid can be made brave. Let us take the case of St. Peter again. What happened

to him after his denial of his Master? The crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, the look of Christ revealed to him the whole wretchedness of his condition. He hurried from the Court in tears and in bitter repentance. It was not many days after when the two met again; and then came the restoration. "Lovest thou Me more than these?" "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Thanks be to God, Christ did not repudiate the cowardly Peter, but restored him to his old place and his old service. Nor does He repudiate any of us, however weak. The result of this generous restoration made St. Peter the "rock" Christ saw in him from the first. Gratitude for his pardon, and a clear perception of the great cause for which his Master suffered and for which he had been called, made him a rock. Thus timid men are made brave through a great love, or an assured faith, or through the peace that comes to those who live in the fellowship of the Eternal, or, it may be, through the knowledge of the great cloud of witnesses around them, or the honour of the cause for which they stand. Or, again, the fear of proving oneself unworthy of Christ may kill out the fear of pain or death.

Just at this hour in our history we are all inclined to think of courage as exhibited at its highest in war, and to overlook what may be called *civil* courage. Take, for example, independence of thought, and conceive how immensely difficult it would be for a German of high position or reputation to denounce the war. To do so, a man would have to confront danger to his life, loss of liberty,

obloquy, or possibly (if he escaped these) ruin. The silent pressure of public opinion is so enormous that most men conform. We are trained to depend upon one another to such an extent that we are helpless when isolated. We depend upon those above us and those beneath, upon the members of our family, upon friends and neighbours, upon masters and servants. And this dependence tends to enfeeble our wills. We say that we cannot afford to bring down upon our heads a social boycott, and therefore compromise the situation; we hedge, we prevaricate, we become false. It is, then, necessary, if we would maintain our moral straightness, to assert ourselves, and to resist quietly but firmly every one who would drive us either by threats or authority to say or do anything contrary to our own conviction. We may lose position or friends or employment, but the only contribution we can ever make to the freedom of man is in our unflinching faithfulness to ourselves. As Professor Paulsen says: "To remain true to oneself, that is the aim of ideal courage. No one can possess it who does not have his life's centre within himself; whoever makes external things his ultimate aim cannot attain to inner freedom." That which in our day has aroused the courage of our people, and their fierce indignation, has been the conviction that an assault of incalculable strength has been made upon this inner freedom, the essence of which is the right to direct their own life. This civil courage, moreover, is required in lowlier walks than European wars. We have often seen the need of it in private life and in the life of the Christian Church. Christian

men have been afraid to take up the responsibilities of living, as if in the fulfilment of some of its duties they might lose God's care—so unlike were they to St. Paul who was persuaded that "*life* shall not be able to separate us from the love of God." The many fears of life have laid hold of them—the fear of pain, of mockery, of poverty, of old age, of death, or of one or other of a hundred smaller things. Above these in some men's lives is the fear of what the public will say, or think of them, if they do this or that. This regard for the world's opinion, F. Faber says, sponges out of the soul the thought of God. Therefore we need courage to live boldly, "to live mightily."

"He saw also," says Bunyan, "that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter, what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in a maze; at last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, Set down my name, Sir; the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put an helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely; so after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace; at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying:

‘Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou shalt win.’

So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they. Then Christian smiled, and said, I think verily I know the meaning of this.”

CHAPTER XVII

The Mystery of Suffering

ALL men are agreed that we should try as far as in us lies to lessen suffering, and, most would add, to abolish it, if indeed in the long future this be possible. We think we see advantages in it for this man or that, but when it comes to our own door we wish there were none. If it should be our lot to have watched one we care for racked with pain, not for a day or two, but through long weary years, we protest to man and God that there is no sense in it at least in this case, which we have daily witnessed. So sure are we of our ground in thinking so, that we argue our whole moral nature corroborates us. Why, the more we advance from savagery to religion, the more intolerable does the thought of such suffering become! We cannot bear to look on it, or to hear the cries of the helpless sufferers by day and their moaning in sleep. And the suffering goes on and on and on through the dragging hours and days. The Psalmist speaks of joy coming in the morning to the sufferer, and of the anger of God lasting but a moment. No such happy lot is theirs; in the daytime they weary for the night, and in the night they weary for the dawn. We who have to watch by their side, can bear it only by closing the heart against it, or escaping for a time into the company of the healthy and happy.

Wide as the world itself is the story of suffering. Down through all the thousands of generations of which we have records in geology, there is evidence of its presence on earth. Wherever we have literature, telling of man's experiences and thoughts of life, it leaps out upon us; in every land it waits on the traveller, and every living soul, whether infant or ancient, has his share. We all know it, and all ignore it while we can. Are not the joys of children endless, even of the diseased? Youth is full of hope, and launches out gaily on this sea of troubles, awakening hope in all who are interested in their future. Men and women put forth their efforts, have their dreams and visions for themselves and their children, as if success, and prosperity, and happiness were the only possible issue. All the while they are encompassed on every side by pain and disappointment and shipwreck, by sorrow, defeat, and ruined lives. We live in a world of surpassing beauty, in a time of great intellectual achievement, of high culture and refinement, and yet at the same time in the midst of the unspeakable squalor and hideousness of our great cities. Refinement and bestiality contend with one another, knowledge with ignorance, gentleness with savagery.

These are plain, undeniable facts, and form the conditions of life which we are asked to accept. We may remedy what we can, but there are evils beyond our remedy, struggles proceeding which seem to lie in the nature of things, and there is death on every hand, and death waiting for each of us at the end. The heart rises in protest against it all, asking in its helplessness: How can God tolerate

such universal misery? Perhaps there is no such fruitful cause of scepticism as the presence of suffering in the world. The sceptic's argument is a simple one. God is said to be compassionate and almighty. If He is almighty, He can remove all suffering; if He, being almighty, does not, it is because He is not compassionate. A God who is both compassionate and almighty must make His creatures happy; and He does not. Can there be a God? Now the way to answer a doubt is to carry the doubt further, reaching the heart of things. Let us try.

There is no mystery in pain or suffering taken by themselves. We are sentient creatures, *i.e.* capable of feeling, with bodies susceptible to pleasure and pain. If we were not sentient, we should have no pleasures; if we are to be susceptible to the pleasant things of life, we must also be susceptible to the painful; if the warmth of the sun delights us, the cold of winter disturbs us; one food pleases, another repels us. Pleasure and pain, then, are two aspects of the same fact in our bodily constitution. Still, let us suppose that St. John's vision came true here and now: "Neither shall there be any more pain," would it be a happy change? If it came true, nothing would hurt us or those about us, no sound would alarm us, none of our senses would be jarred. We should never shrink or hold back because of the fear of pain.

The author of *I Wonder* has a very delightful and effective chapter on this subject. In his own charming way he reminds us of the terror that is awakened in the sufferer, not only by the pain of a disease, but by the fear of the approach of a new attack.

To be rid of it would be to wake from a nightmare. Imagine the whole world loosed both from the fear and from the fact of pain. What would happen? To begin with, it would be a time of more disease and of more death; for we should have less warning against them. Pain is the warning bell which diseases sound that we may avoid them. If there were no pain, no warnings given of their coming, of their presence, of the havoc they were working, the land would be full of homes for incurables. We should die like flies. Disease would not hurt, it would kill. Old age would be a rare event; the average length of life would be from five-and-twenty to thirty. That is the argument of this wise writer, and he proceeds to apply it in detail to our health, our fitness, our cleanliness, our wholesome living.

But here our theme is not pain only, but also suffering, and there are sufferings deeper than physical pain. If there were no suffering, we should never feel an insult or a wrong, and we should have no scruple in committing them against others. Coarseness of speech or conduct would not offend any one, and we should all quickly relapse into brutal language. Our own foolish and uncivil words would never rankle in our hearts, and the memory of them would not work as it does now for our refinement. So far as one can see, very few of the Christian graces would long survive. There would be no need for endurance, patience, gentleness, or self-control towards a brother. We should cease to apologise; and there would be no necessity for forgiveness, because we should never be pained by anything done to us. All that is lovely and of good report would

with. Friends would fall to bullying one another as men do in the dens of our towns. Home life would be a continual wrangle. If we had a month of it, the most sceptical mind would change his ground of attack on religion, convinced that the God who created us capable of suffering was not only wise but kind.

There is, however, another way of looking at it. Not only does it purify those who accept it patiently, but it chastens the world who merely look on. Pain, loss, suffering are evident enough, but they can be transformed by a new light falling upon them. We see it in the profession of nursing. The care of the afflicted was, in former times, left to the least careful, if any care was bestowed upon them at all. In the New Testament times we find that under a false conception of what "possession by evil spirits" really was, the victims were bound in chains, or driven from their homes to haunt the tombs, naked and lacerating themselves with stones. Through long centuries, treatment of this kind continued, lasting almost to our own day. What other treatment do our criminal class, surely the most unfortunate of all, receive even to-day? Yet through all these unhappy generations the spirit of Christ—compassion for every sufferer and every sinner—has been forcing its way. We are coming to recognise that humanity is the right of every human being. It has laid hold of the public mind, and keeps calling to us as a sick child calls his mother from all other engagements and from all personal enjoyments. Nurses give their lives, volunteers offer themselves for this service in any part of the

world where we have wounded men to tend. They bring their gifts and accomplishments into city and military and field hospitals, comforting and brightening and giving courage and hope to many who have never known what it was to have a gentle word spoken to them, or a kindly hand laid upon their brow.

All this tender kindness is reacting upon those who are ministering it. Out into ever widening circles it spreads, summoning tens of thousands to help who must stay at home. We are being made perfect not alone by our own sufferings, but also by the thought of the sufferings of others. Tenderness is the result, and it passes slowly into all the spheres of life, into speech, and finally into our thoughts of those who wrong us. So long as there is pain and misery, so long also as the soul can be ruffled and soothed, torn and comforted, lacerated by words and comforted by them, so long will tenderness of speech and action be one of the highest of human attainments. This consecration of life to the relief of others will sometimes reveal itself in strange places. Some hundred and fifty years ago a boy was born in the deepest poverty of a drunken father and a consumptive mother. He was a musical genius, exploited by his father for the sake of drink. At the age of twenty-seven, this genius became deaf—the heaviest loss conceivable, one might suppose, to a musician—and for two-thirds of his working life he heard not a word. What a disappointment to him as he realised what this growing infirmity would become! What torture! What a tragedy! He was of a deeply af-

fectionate nature, yet he was practically homeless and friendless. He had to depend on servants, who robbed him, and beat him until his face would be bleeding from their wounds. Was it not pathetic? Yet in the midst of it all, he could write: "I am happy every time I overcome something." "My art shall be devoted entirely to alleviating the conditions of the poor." After the loss of his dearest friend, he wrote in his note-book: "Submission, absolute submission to destiny! No longer canst thou exist for thyself, only for others. My God, give me strength to overcome myself." One of his critics says of him: "A very contagion of courage evolves from his personality, an eager joy for the strife, the exaltation of a consciousness which feels the God within." In the presence of that heroic nature, let us ask ourselves: Is suffering good or evil? A deaf musician seems as likely to prove a great artist as would a blind painter. Yet this man was as transcendent in music as Shakespeare was in poetry. He was Beethoven.

He was, of course, a great genius, but we are not speaking of music. His genius has simply lifted his character as a man and a conqueror of suffering into full light. There was something in the man, apart from his supreme gift, that has become light and strength to the world. Every one of us has it in him to become a genius in spiritual things by concentrating the will, as he did, on the life of the spirit—by seeking our happiness, as he did, in overcoming something. Life is not meant to be a time of comfort and ease. We may aim at them, struggle to secure them, may even attain a breathing space

and rest amid the storm. Still it is only for a little; some new worry, trouble, disappointment, anxiety, loss, assails our home. To a man who is not content to drift, there is always need for struggle. We must bend to our oar and pull with might and main, if we would not be carried down to the cataracts.

But what if the struggle be the meaning of life? What if the nobility of life, all that is refined, worthy, gracious in life, be the outcome of the strenuous heart, of a spirit braced for contest with what is base, selfish, unworthy, the outcome of a will set on God? "A good man," said Lacordaire, "is hard as a diamond, and tender as a mother's heart." How could you produce such a man? You could produce neither the hardihood nor the tenderness except by passing him through suffering. Even when it produces no such fine result as this, suffering prevents the soul from rotting within us. Arthur Hugh Clough, writing of the pains men are at to secure for themselves what really does not matter—the wearing out of heart, and nerves, and brain, the being eager, angry, fierce, hot, imperious, supple—exclaims:—

"O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,
It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely *this*
That keeps us all alive."

It is the struggle that avails. Strange as it may seem, it is not the victory that avails here on earth.

Blessed be God's name, it is not the victory; for to many of us there has come no victory, only courage, fortitude, and the unconquerable mind. The pearl of great price is not that we have conquered, but that we have fought for God, and would not surrender to sin.

Life does not cease to be a struggle because we accept the love of our heavenly Father. To let us escape suffering by means of faith would be to bribe us into accepting it; it would debase faith and make the spiritual life a matter of trafficking. Whether we be Christian or pagan, there remains the same campaign; only, the Christian has the assurance of deliverance, the confidence that he will not be left to fight alone. The pagan may meet his tribulation with the spirit of bearing it—who “tholes” o’ercomes; the Christian, on the other hand, with the spirit of bearing up in it, of cheerfully accepting the challenge of life, and in the strength of his Master rising above it into His peace. There was in our Lord, even when His sufferings were at their keenest, for example, under the shadow of the Cross and on the Cross itself, a liberty of the spirit, a disinterestedness of thought. He was not absorbed, as most of us would have been, in the sense of the injustice He suffered, or of the torture He was passing through; He thought of the women who wept to see Him on His way to death, of His disciples, of His mother, of the soldiers doing what they knew not, of the thief in agony beside Him. That was the victory of Christ, the very highest attainment of spiritual power. He was victorious, when to all who saw it, or heard of it then, it was a disastrous and

final defeat, for He transformed the grossest crime the world has ever seen into good, adversity into gain, the loss of all into eternal riches for mankind, and the blackness of darkness into the glorious light of God.

In the presence of any one who is suffering in body or soul, we dare not talk lightly of the good of it, or of the opportunity it offers of attaining grace. If we did we should probably feel guilty of levity. Yet the world could not afford to lose just this very instance of suffering before us. "What made you a poet?" asked one famous French writer of another. His answer was: "Suffering." Carlyle, writing of Dante, one of the three or four supreme poets of the world, tells how the people of Verona, when they saw him on the streets, used to say: "See, there is the man that was in Hell!" Then Carlyle continues:

"Ah yes, he had been in Hell;—in Hell enough, in long severe sorrow and struggle; as the like of him is pretty sure to have been. *Commedias* that come out *divine* are not accomplished otherwise. Thought, true labour of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? Born as out of the black whirlwind;—true *effort*, in fact, as of a captive struggling to free himself: that is Thought. In all ways we are 'to become perfect through *suffering*.'—But, as I say, no work known to me is so elaborated as this of Dante's. It has all been as if molten, in the hottest furnace of his soul."

When indeed a man can accept his pain, his disaster, his sorrow, as an opportunity of attaining to, or manifesting the presence of Christ within him,

then he rises into the upper air of the spiritual life. That is what St. Paul calls *winning* Christ, *knowing* Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. In this way alone does the outward, the natural, man perish, and the inward man is renewed. The boisterous element in him is subdued, the aggressive is chastened, the resentful is transformed into meekness, and the hard is made tender. We are killed all the day long, and yet are conquerors! This note of triumph in St. Paul's writings is characteristic of the disciplined Christian. The pathetic tones of some people's conversation and writings do not generally spring from much experience of suffering or sorrow, but rather from being spectators of it. The personal experience of it tends to produce not only compassion, but courage, helpfulness, even hopefulness. It is not the sufferer who indulges in pathos. The martyrs at the stake in the sight of crowds, and the equally great martyrs of the sick-room, sing the praises of Him who makes them more than conquerors.

What is true of the individual is true also of a nation. Oh, through what unutterable agonies have nations risen into greatness. Men count victories by the number of enemy soldiers or sailors killed and wounded, little reckoning that the death of the man is the least part of the anguish, for his loss stretches out into the sorrow of his home, into the lowering of the chances of his children, sometimes also into their degradation. Often, too, the nation loses its finest, ablest, noblest sons. An invasion means the callous and brutal sacrifice of all that the nation counts most precious, and all they have treasured

for centuries. Their very life's blood is poured out unstintedly, lavished and wasted, as we are apt to think, through the evil ambitions and passions of men. "Has God gone mad?" cried a poor Armenian woman, as she witnessed the massacre of her family and her neighbours. Nevertheless, out of the ruins and the carnage, there come to life, shoot up, expand and take possession of the people a new passion for justice, a new compassion for all that suffer wrong, a new resolve to hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God and of a godlike humanity. "Does God care?" the careless still ask. He at least is no sentimental spectator, for He has entered into humanity, has taken upon Him the burden of our suffering and sorrow, and is touched with a feeling of every pang of our spirit. What does the cross of Christ mean, if not that He is a sharer in all our experience of both good and evil?

Now, it is this power we have received from the cross which enables us to *compel the world to yield us the future we desire*. If we can take up our cross, deny ourselves, endure hardness for a great cause, we can make ourselves the masters of our destiny, not perhaps immediately, but as a race. The world is at the bidding of the men whose wills are fixed. There is a truth in that strange new commandment which Nietzsche gave to his disciples: "Be hard!" In startling opposition though it be to St. Paul's "Be tender-hearted," to St. John's "Love one another," to St. James's "Easy to be intreated," there is yet truth in it. We hear, strange as it may appear, an echo of our Lord's own words: "Pluck it out! cut it off! cast it from thee." It is by self-

denial that anything worthy can be done or obtained. Not hard-heartedness towards the weak and the erring, but the hardness, the hardihood, of a soldier in a long and bitter campaign. With this, the world is at our command. There are hundreds of worlds within our reach—sin, money, art, science, home, beauty, squalor, the service of God and man. Choose your world, and you have thereby in an instant chosen also your friends, your interests, the books you will read, the places you will haunt. From the ends of the earth, comrades will claim your attention; you will find encouragement in your pursuit in the newspapers, on the streets, in the shop-windows. At the same time your choice will have determined your aversions, what you will have to forgo, avoid, what you will cut off and cast from you. There is no progress but by self-denial. If your world is the world of goodness, mercy, justice, love—if, in a word, it is Christ's world, then indeed the deepest heart of the Universe comes to your help. You have taken the side of God, and God accordingly is on your side. What the cost may be, the agony of soul, you cannot tell, but you have fixed your will on a future which the Eternal has decreed, and you will infallibly obtain it.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Sudden Splendour

AS we have seen, the reason men mistrust emotion in religion is because it is so irrational, incalculable, extravagant. If those who are swept away by it had only reflected for a moment, they would have seen the folly, the absurdity of their behaviour, but under the sway of strong feeling they could not reflect. Yet it would seem that the greatness of man or woman lies in something else than reason. We all admire actions which cannot well be defended, which indeed we never attempt to defend, but only wonder at and admire. There is an instance of this in the life of our Lord which will make plain what we mean.

Six days before the Passover, the fatal Passover which was to be His last, Jesus was at supper in the house of Simon at Bethany. Lazarus and his sisters, as well as the twelve disciples, were present. St. Mark, in a few words, reminds us of His surroundings, the chief priests and the scribes were plotting how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. In the ranks of His friends there was at the same time a greedy, disappointed, and disaffected man, who was brooding over a scheme for putting an end to a movement which he had ceased to believe in. A very little would force him into action;

and he, too, was present at the supper. One feels the air growing thick with deadly designs, when suddenly the action of a woman precipitates the crisis, the brooding disciple hurries out, the priests and scribes find their agent, and Jesus is lost. Mary had slipped out of the room quietly, returned with an alabaster box of ointment, valued at £10 or so, and, breaking it, had poured out the ointment on Jesus' feet. The odour of it filled the room, and drew the attention of all the guests. It was an unexpected and extraordinary thing to do, and doubtless, after the surprise of it, many thoughts and emotions were contending in the minds of them all. It was Judas who spoke first, and, according to St. Mark, some of the disciples, who had evidently never suspected his loyalty, agreed with him: "Why was this waste of the ointment made? Why was it not sold, and the money given to the poor?" Had it not been Judas who made this criticism, thousands who have read the story would have made it in his room. And how true the criticism was! There were many poor people in Jerusalem, widows (for instance) struggling to maintain their children, and £10 in those days would have maintained them for a year. Large numbers still feel that there is something in Judas's question.

Yet what we wish for the poor is *not* money to feed them, but an opportunity for them to earn money to feed themselves, or another and manlier spirit within them to scorn help so long as they can help themselves. How can that spirit be brought to the birth? Certainly not by reproving and suppressing devotion, or by chilling off the impulsive, un-

premeditated outbursts of love, or forcing back the rising waves of enthusiasm for a great worker or a great cause. It is those very people who let their heart utter itself in extravagant sacrifices, or irrational risks, that give their money to feed the poor, and their lives to work for and defend them.

We cannot help asking what was in Mary's mind that led her just then to "make this waste." We know how the respectable poor and those who are far above poverty, as Mary was, prepare for their own burial, or that of a relative; and it is not improbable that this precious possession was intended for that. Was it something which she had heard or seen in the city, that had possibly led her to suspect danger to her Lord? Or was it a woman's insight into character that had made her mistrust Judas, and that night dislike his look? Or did she *feel* something, which she did not comprehend, working unrest in her soul. Here was One to whom she owed everything that was precious to her—hope, peace, life—and He was surrounded by enemies, strong, subtle, deadly. The fact is, she was impelled to give Him her best. It was an impulse of deep devotion, undesigned, irresistible. She had not reasoned about it, or waited for a calculated moment. Her heart spoke, and the heart often has reasons which reason is not fit to judge.

Now, it is this unreasoning, impulsive, extravagant heart of humanity that saves the race from corruption. It is the rush of an apparently irrational impulse of love that lifts men out of greed, and self-indulgence and degradation. We see it in the absurd, illogical, mad love of women for worthless

husbands and unnatural sons. Calculating, cool minds would separate them, set the woman free. But she will not be freed. She will not leave them, and her devotion is quite frequently the power that saves them. What is religion in its highest moments and divinest service but this? Those who think of it as the means of escaping hell do not know the rudiments of Christ's teaching, and may not escape the hell they flee from. Christianity is a devotion. Very often it is a calm, deep passion of love for One who has saved them from themselves and the power of the world, who has revealed a new life of high and worthy purpose, given them power to press on towards it, and from time to time bestowed on them a joy unspeakable and a peace that passes understanding. Our Lord understood what this extravagance of Mary meant, and accepted it for what it was worth, and its worth was so great to Him that He prophesied that as the odour of it filled the room so would the splendour and glory of it fill the whole world. Extravagant indeed it was, but He Himself was on the verge of a sacrifice more extravagant still, an act of such prodigal wastefulness, as the cold and calculating mind of His day would have thought it, that it was then, and is still, impossible for many to believe it was intended. This Christ Jesus, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich."

Further, we see how highly He esteemed Mary's gift by the defence He made of it. We can believe that He was as much taken by surprise as any one present; ay, that He would rather not have had that

honour paid to Him. Still He was not going to allow Judas, or any man, to slight the devotion of a swelling heart—an extravagance if you like, but the extravagance of a loyal spirit consecrated to God. To measure it by money was intolerable, for money at the best can only reveal the mind of the person who spends, and Mary owed herself to Christ, and therefore all she had was His.

“Give all thou canst: high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more.”

These words were written by Wordsworth in defence of the royal saint who paid for, and of the architect who planned, King's College Chapel, Cambridge, a positive extravagance of beauty, and he continues:—

“So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.”

We do not require to go far afield to-day for illustrations of the splendour of sacrifices made, and of risks taken, in behalf of friends. Every newspaper has its story, and every fireside hears, without ever wearying, some new tale of daring which our men perform for one another. Officers refuse to leave their servants, a subaltern crawls out on hands and knees a whole mile to trail a wounded officer

back to his trench, taking hours to the task. Companies fling their lives away to hold the enemy in check for an hour, so that other companies may be saved. Volunteers step out cheerfully for a "forlorn hope," knowing that every man will perish, remembering also that some men must perish if the work is to be done. Sorrow and pride contend with one another in our hearts as we read or hear of what they do. Why should such splendid fellows be lost to the nation? What cause can possibly be worth such a sacrifice? we ask in our "nicely-calculating" way. Then comes the answer: Such lives are not lost. They live again in the souls of those who hear their heroic deeds retold, and they live for generations, awakening the love of heroism and the admiration of self-sacrifice in hundreds who will (according to their nature and their opportunities) fight their battles and win their victories over again. It is an earthly immortality worth earning. We cannot have too many records of noble men and women. Can the story of Nurse Cavell ever be forgotten, or ever cease to stir the blood and nerve the will of our girls? Yet her story, and that of hundreds more, can be kept alive only by means of books, big and little. The best nursery of British patriotism has always been, and will continue to be, the libraries of our homes and our municipalities. The village Hampden is made by means of the village bookshelf, and by the village schoolmaster who feels both the tragedy and the greatness of the sacrifice of his old scholars, and of men like them, whose names will never appear in any record of the war.

"Oppression," says Browning, "makes the wise

man mad." It does something vastly finer; it stings him into heroism, the heroism first of personal rebellion. There is a quality in the heart of every one of our noblest sons which works for liberty; for when pressed back and bullied and wronged, he yields for a time; and then the stemmed flood of his long-suffering bursts suddenly, so that, whatever the cost may be, he asserts in rebellion his right to be a *man*. This rebellion of one appeals to many compatriots who have suffered from the same oppression. They catch fire, and the rebellion spreads, until a whole nation asserts and regains its freedom. There are not many nations which have not this story to tell. At some period in their history they have had to throw off the yoke of the foreign oppressor, or (what may prove a heavier task) the yoke of the oppressor at home. Winning or losing in the struggle is not what solely matters; what matters is the sudden splendour of the unconquerable mind asserting itself against evil. It is that which, when told again in epic poetry or epic prose, or the simple narrative of a schoolbook, strengthens the national feeling and keeps "the will to freedom" alive.

Nor is the mind of a people kept brave and true only by the famous names of their history. A great war crowds up the pages of newspapers and books with narratives of this kind until they become commonplace. Yet not one of them is lost. "A Wesleyan military chaplain was on one of the barges which were landing men from our troopships at the Dardanelles. A man was shot down. The chaplain made a dash to the rescue to bring the wounded soldier back to safety, but a Roman Catholic priest

standing near grabbed hold of him, saying, 'You mustn't think of it. It is madness. It is going to certain death.' The Wesleyan shook off the restraining hand, replying, 'I have got my orders, and they come from a Higher Command than yours, and I'm going.' He went, and was struck by a bullet while in the act of beginning his work of mercy. Instantly the priest sprang after him, but the officer in charge of the landing party called out, 'Stay where you are. I forbid your going. We are losing too many men.' The priest calmly went on, only turning his head to say, as he passed, 'Did you not hear what my Wesleyan comrade said? I, too, have got my orders—from the Higher Command.' Within a few moments he lay dead beside his brother of the *Cross*." Or take this from a working-class home. A woman was busy with her house-work, when her neighbour came rushing in with the cry, "My baby is choking, come and help." The child was dying of diphtheria. Immediately the woman rushed to help, lifted the infant, and putting her mouth to the child's mouth, sucked the matter from its throat, spat it out, and sucked again. She laid the child down—now breathing quietly, and after rinsing her mouth again and again, went back to her work. When asked later in the day how she could think of doing it, since she had children of her own, she replied, "I never thought anything about it. The little thing was choking, and I had to do what I could to save it."

One of our most interesting and suggestive essayists, writing on this subject, asks:—

“Does it not seem as though reason had very little to do with the glory of personality? The quick crisis, allowing no second for thought, tests the whole nature to its fibres. It comes suddenly as a shell that scatters the limbs of men before they know there is danger. In a flash the moment arrives and is gone, but by the flash the recesses of the soul are displayed. To hesitate is in itself to be lost, for the moment never comes again, and by that hesitation all the man’s commonplace qualities are exposed as in a gallery of stupid idols. But regardless of thought and chance and time, to leap hot-blooded into deed—that sheds a sudden splendour, rejoicing mankind as they grope their way among the visible darkness of systems and philosophies. For the quick illumination reveals a nature that repays the groaning and travailing of creation’s groans.”

True indeed; such an action is the revelation of a nature which has been built up of thoughts and feelings that have come, had their influence, and then gone. But whither have they gone? They have gone to form the “nature” which in a single act illumines the path of all of us in our earthly life. Reason is far from having nothing to do with it. The truth is that it is reason itself which has become our instinct. Our wills have been practising heroism in secret on the brave actions of others of whom we read in books; we have for years imitated them in imagination, and in little acts also at home and at work. Out of the wealth of our past experience, in reading and suffering and disappointments, in what we admired and what we learned to detest and loathe, come the spirit and the personality which are able to meet the crisis. Great acts are not the fruit of a trifling, mocking, self-indulgent soul.

One of the surprises of the war has been the revelation of greatness in the conduct of some of our men who at home were least promising. Their homes, their training, their circumstances, and their past career gave no promise of anything that would break into sudden splendour. Yet the splendour shone forth, making us reflect again. Can it be possible that the worst in the land could be saved for their country and God, if we, with diligence and wisdom, set ourselves *as a nation* to save them? Might not the one worthy deed be a revelation to the man himself of what he could do always? We have only to encourage him, guiding him to believe in his better self as his true self. One good action is not much to build on, but the germ of goodness which is in it is its guarantee for the future. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump—if *we give it time and warmth*. As we reflect on these problems, we begin to see what could be made of men, even the worst of them, if only the nation would set itself in grim earnest to train the young for noble character as well as for knowledge, and if the Church set itself to conceive of religious education not as instruction merely, even although it should be in divine things, but as a spirit of courage and daring, of manliness and chivalry, of purity, of nobility of thought and speech, of helpfulness to the cause of God and man.

CHAPTER XIX

Wonder

AMONG the graces enumerated by the apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians *wonder* is not mentioned. Yet wonder is a grace of the highest value in the spiritual life. It is not mentioned because it had not become the subject of reflection in itself, apart from the person or the event that was the object which awakened it within the mind. Within his mind it was continually awakened by what he experienced of God's action in his life. Indeed he lived and moved in a universe of increasing wonder.

One may not have considered how frequently this attitude of mind is referred to in the Old Testament, yet it is in one form or another exceedingly common:—

“Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things:
And blessed be His glorious name for ever;
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen, and Amen.”

Continually in the Psalms we meet with similar expressions, and if we take the words which convey a kindred thought, reverence, awe, adoration, and keep our minds open to catch their mood, we shall quickly realise how these poets dwelt in wonder.

“Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:
Who is a great god like unto God?
Thou art the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast made known Thy strength among the
peoples.

The waters saw Thee, O God;
The waters saw Thee, they were afraid:
The depths also trembled.

The voice of Thy thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook.

Thy way was in the sea,
And Thy paths in the great waters,
And Thy footsteps were not known.

Thou leddest Thy people like a flock,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.”

The same remark may be made of the New Testament. We are never far away from some utterance or other that shows us how these writers were filled with amazement at what was happening around them. It is said that wonder is the element in which a child lives, and that its constant mood is one of open-eyed expectation of some new splendour. If this is the case, the early Christians were the children of our religion, looking out as they did on the marvels through which men passed as they accepted Christ, and expecting, as they did, new marvels every day. Let us recall the day when Jesus returned to Nazareth and preached His first sermon in the synagogue. The meeting-place, we may as-

sure ourselves, was crowded, and the attention was strained, for the message He delivered was surprising. "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth." From Nazareth He went down immediately to Capernaum, once more went to the synagogue and taught, and in the service cured a man of an unclean devil. Between the teaching and the cure, the people were deeply impressed, and, as we are told, "Amazement came upon all, and they spake together, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out."

Not only is wonder the spiritual universe in which the people move who see Jesus, but it is the universe in which He lives as He observes them and the work of God upon them. When the centurion begged Him not to trouble Himself coming to his house to heal his servant, saying: "But speak the word, and he shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard it, He marvelled at him." The world of men was not commonplace to our Redeemer; it was full of splendour and glory. Back to Nazareth He went, eager to teach and to help, but they would not listen; and as the result "He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." Then this is added: "He marvelled because of their unbelief." Could it be that He was taken aback? Or was it that His own mind was so

full of the vision of what His Father had prepared and was willing to bestow upon them, that it seemed incredible to Him they should turn away from the gift?

In the cases we shall now mention, the word marvel, or wonder, or amazement is not used, yet we can recognize it as the attitude of mind in which our Lord is looking out upon life. We recognise it when we think ourselves back into His situation: "Your Father maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Where did our Lord learn that—a truth so patent to us, so hard to believe and rest on by those whose religious life was built up on the thought that the blessings of God were the promised portion only of the good and the just? One is carried back to His earlier days, when, in the evening, or more probably in the morning, before the break of day, he would wander among the hills round Nazareth, praying and meditating, observing nature and working out through insight those great truths He was to teach His generation and all the ages to come. And "it came to Him" that God's care for His children was a universal, impartial care. When it came to Him, it dispelled the limited, narrow teaching of the synagogues, and filled His Divine Spirit with wonder and peace and a great joy.

It is not necessary to multiply illustrations of this; let us close with His pathetic outburst over the city: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings,

and ye would not!" Our first thought in reading the words is wholly of our Lord's sorrow; yet as we dwell upon them, we see how the doom of the city had risen up before His mind, and held Him astounded at its blindness.

In the case of St. Paul we shall content ourselves by pointing out one passage. He had been dealing with what weighed upon the minds of the Chosen People in his day, that they were apparently forgotten and outcast from the Christian commonwealth; he had shown that through the Gentiles they would yet be brought in. It was a strange and wonderful way of saving the whole nation, and he exclaimed: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever."

What, then, is the essential nature of wonder? It is not in itself religious; it is religious only when it is set upon God, and Christ, and the great spiritual world. In this it is like faith, hope, and love. We may have faith in a wicked man or in a pernicious doctrine, we may love the world and not the Father, we may have hope in lies and in a life that rests only on the sand. It is the "content" of those graces that gives them their worth; they are redemptive when their object is God, when the heart turns to Him in faith, or hope, or love. Wonder stands beside them in this. Wonder is the attitude

of mind produced by something great, unexpected, striking. We are arrested, checked even in our reasoning about the person or the event before us. Very probably we began by trying to understand, when suddenly there rose before our minds the vastness, the utter grandeur of what we were dealing with, and all our mental operations gave way to wonder. The new aspect was presented to us, and in its presence we became silent, humbled. An old friend is found capable of transcending all that ever was expected of him, a commonplace man or woman rises into greatness of a just rage, a meek and gentle woman as by a flash from heaven takes fire and her whole being bursts into divine flame. These, and things like these, fill us with wonder. Still it is not fury that chiefly calls it forth in us; rather it is greatness and calm. When wonder has an element of fear in it, we call it awe; when it has an element of admiration, we call it reverence; when it is combined with love, we know it as devotion; and when we surrender our soul in it, then we adore.

It is said that wonder is strongest in a child, that to him every day begins and ends in glory, and that all his experiences are wonderful. There is much truth in that. Then the wonder and the glory fade away, as Wordsworth has taught us, even if we have not observed it in ourselves. The youth must busy himself at his trade or his business or his books, must concentrate his attention on details, and details may kill out the sense of wonder. Wordsworth thinks that science has a peculiar tendency to this, as money-making has. But Ruskin does not agree with him here. And surely modern science, with

its great sweep through the ages, with its vision of the long, slow evolution of the universe, of our planet, of life, of man, of each of his organs, has opened up new and irresistible sources of wonder. The study of the human body, of the brain for example, must awaken within many a young mind endless amazement at the depth of the riches of the wisdom of its adaptation to our needs. And when we come to study the workings of the soul of man, his sensations, thoughts, feelings, passions, aspirations, struggles, deeds, or when we try to think of the vast and varied literatures of the world, their greatness, depth, and beauty, or again, when we pass before our minds even in the most cursory way man's discoveries concerning the earth, the laws of nature, the heavens—when we pause in our work and contemplate these and a hundred other things like them, can we fail to be filled with wonder and awe and reverence?

Yet the concentration of the mind on details, on special pieces of work or special studies, may blind us to the glory of the universe in which we live. A lady of education and ability confessed that on her first visit to Switzerland she had hardly noticed the Alps and the magnificence of the scenery. It seemed incredible, until she said that she was at the time passionately devoted to the study of botany, and could not lift her eyes from the ground. Only in some such way as that can we account for the highly trained officers of an invading army destroying the incomparable treasures of Louvain or the glory of Rheims Cathedral. Could anything be more precious in education than to direct and train the

mind in the grace of wonder? To teach reverence for the great men and women of all ages and lands, to teach chivalry towards the weak and helpless, and admiration for all that is true and noble and just and lovely—this is education, and nothing is education that misses it. To many it may seem a small matter or a mistaken conception, but to us it would be better to fail in a college examination than never to have *felt* Shakespeare in the blood, never to have been awed by Hamlet or Lear, or thrilled by Spenser or Shelley, or elevated and calmed by Wordsworth. William Blake, the poet and painter, a man whose soul was of imagination all compact, says in one of his letters:—

“I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action. ‘What!’ it will be questioned, ‘when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?’ Oh no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!’ I question not my corporeal eye any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it.”

Words like these may seem extravagant, and with most men would be so, but it is not difficult to perceive that to a mind trained to wonder the world would have just such glories to reveal as it revealed to Blake. Moreover, there are many most sane minds, practical, bright and active, which see these glories. They see them because they have seen Christ, and have learned to look with His eyes. For instance, Traherne asks:—

"Is it not a sweet thing to have all covetousness and ambition satisfied, suspicion and infidelity removed, courage and joy infused? Yet all this is attained in the fruition of the world. For thereby God is seen in all His wisdom, power, goodness, and glory.

"Your enjoyment of the World is never right, till you so esteem it, that everything in it is more your treasure than a king's exchequer full of Gold and Silver. Can you take too much joy in your Father's works? He is Himself in everything.

"You never enjoy the world aright, till you see how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God, and prize in everything the service which they do you, by manifesting His glory and goodness to your soul.

"Your enjoyment of the world is never right, till every morning you awake in Heaven, see yourself in your Father's Palace, and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air as Celestial Joys.

"You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the Heavens, and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world."

That is the meaning of wonder when the Great Object of it is God and God's eternal purpose.

If we mean to introduce this grace into the lives of our young working people, we shall require teachers and preachers who can see the glory that is hidden in common things and plain people, who can tell them the long history of a grain of sand, or reveal to them the tragedies and the moral victories

hiding from men's sight in a mean street. These streets are teeming with children in the early evening, and with youths at night. Who discerns what their future will be of good or evil? Who thinks of them as hungering for life, fuller life, or sees with wondering eyes how they wait for guidance, and when the true Guide appears, crowd after Him into the Palace of Life!

A few minutes' reflection on the use which is generally made of the Bible may surprise us. In itself as mere literature it is a wonderful collection of books, of the richest human thought, and of bewitching beauty of style. Yet the young have it prescribed as a book of tasks in geography and history, and their parents in church hear it treated as if it were little more than a vast collection of snippets suitable for texts. We have volumes of the beauties of Shakespeare, selections from Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Francis Thompson, while out of a feigned or a mistaken reverence for the Bible there is hardly such a thing as a volume of the literary excellences of the Bible. Young people do not as a rule, and of their own accord, read it, because no one has ever introduced them to it as a treasure-house, or taught them to enjoy its poetry or rhythmic prose, training their ears by its cadences and their souls by its elevation and truth and purity. Happy the scholar or the student who has had a teacher or professor who has trained them to see and feel its beauties, and to bow in reverence before its majesty and its soul-penetrating gaze.

Again, is it not possible to reveal to the humblest and the youngest something of the wonder that lies

unobserved in the spiritual life even of a child? It would be well for all to learn early to respect and honour every living being, to recognise that there is a mystery in every soul, a divine training in every life, and that Church history is the story of the evolution of Mankind under the teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. No little coterie or sect but has its history and its meaning; no vast upheaval but has had purpose. Through all the Christian ages men have been passionately in earnest in their search after God, and the fiercest and bitterest of their struggles have always had in them some portion of the truth and also of the spirit of the Master. They were like the Apostle of the Gentiles, at least in this, that when they were wrong it was for the truth's sake they fought, and that, when they were found fighting on the side of Christ's enemies, it was because they believed they were obeying Christ. The thought will teach us charity, will make us fear our own hardness, and reverence the devotion of our fellowmen.

Above all wonders are the wonders of Christ's Personality and of God Himself. If we find something unfathomable in every man, demanding our honour and reverence, we will be silent in the presence of the Eternal, lifting up our hearts in adoration. Yet it has been here that we who preach have so often failed. We have spoken as if we thought we could define Him, construe Him, the Eternal, Omnipresent Father of Love. Perhaps we left the impression that He would be easy to handle, all too human, too like ourselves. Like us indeed He is, but His glory fills the heavens and the earth; and when

for a moment we catch a glimpse of Him, we are so filled with the thought that we lose sight of ourselves, and losing ourselves we find a better self in Him. It is no longer we that live, but He that liveth in us.

The next day the old man
 died at 10/17

Has not Rudyah yet
 being a few days
 at the West.

ing a comparison with another man who is weak; in any real sense, no man has the capacity of being strong. The Prophet Isaiah measures men aright when, massing them in nations, he says they are as a drop in a bucket, and as the fine dust in a balance. Think of your strong man tossed about like a spar in a raging sea, or in the grip of the microbes of a deadly plague. Nevertheless, little and weak though he be in this vast Universe, he has his modicum of power, which may be increased by training. His muscular energy and nerve-energy, though easily exhausted, may be renewed by refreshment and rest. That energy is made available to him through a body which has its own laws. What energy is at his disposal can be utilised only through the body, and only in strict obedience to the laws by which it works. It has its own methods and its own limitations, which it is their wisdom to learn. Sir Thomas Clouston, in *The Hygiene of Mind*, says:

“How easily put right things would be if properly understood! What alarm and distress could be saved if the irritability of indigestion, the fears of heart disease, the gloom of influenza, and the violence of temper of commencing brain disease were regarded with physiological charity and properly treated! What permanent estrangement between lads of eighteen and fathers at the climacteric could not be saved, if the psychology of those periods of life were taken into account! What difficulties the schoolmaster might not get over, if he had this knowledge, and exercised this charity! How much mental disease might be avoided, if its causes were understood, and its preliminary symptoms properly treated! How much blood was shed in France at the Revolution because men were

hungry! How many repressive Acts of Parliament have been needed because our city workpeople and their wives and children had not fresh air enough and decent houses to live in!"

There is another fact concerning our bodily energy of which we must take note. There is in us all a reserve of strength which we rarely or never use, and of which we remain wholly unconscious until some crisis arises in our life. We judge that we are all capable of heroic feats, because of the feats which ordinary people like ourselves perform when the demand is made on them. The story is well known of the man who ran from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens, a distance of twenty miles, without stopping, in order to announce to the Athenians the victory of their soldiers over the Persians. That was indeed a feat; yet the narrow limit of the man's strength is seen in the fact that after delivering his message he fell dead. Dr. W. B. Carpenter vouches for the truth of this incident, which he tells in his *Mental Physiology*. A maid-servant, advanced in years and feeble, having heard an alarm of fire, seized a large box containing her whole property and ran downstairs with it. After the fire had been extinguished, she could not move it a hair's-breadth (possibly from exhaustion), and it required two men to carry it upstairs again. The incident shows not only the wonderful reserve of power which may be called forth in us on an emergency, and for a very short time, but also the very narrow limit of it at the utmost.

Now, this physical energy of ours is placed by na-

ture at the disposal of our minds, and, seeing we are dealing with the religious aspect of man, we must also say, placed at the disposal of our spiritual nature. Seeing that our physical nature and our spiritual are bound together inseparably here on earth, body and soul must contrive to work together in harmony. Hence has arisen the problem: What influence have they on each other? This problem has occupied the minds of our ablest men, and is the origin of the books to which we referred at the opening of this chapter. Without entering into the discussion, which would be outside the purpose of this book, we may freely admit that body and mind influence each other, as every one knows. Hope and joy are curative powers; despair and sorrow when prolonged will not only lower vitality but may be the occasion of disease. Worry kills, and happiness gives life. How this arises is a question for our scientific and medical men to answer; what interests men is the fact. If one may judge from what one hears and sees, there must be thousands who are anxious to receive guidance in the matter. Books are written to meet their needs. Schools are open for the study of the question; courses of lessons or of lectures are given; churches are founded and flourish, which have doubtless the worship of God as their great purpose, but have also the purpose of healing both body and mind. It would seem that a large body of the middle-class, having acquired a certain knowledge of physiology and mental science, have become keenly interested in themselves, in their health, the upbuilding of character, and the mastery of their thoughts. They learn that they can change

their lives by *thinking*—save themselves from maladies that may be threatening them, attain a brighter and stronger existence than they have known for years. And they are surprised, as if they had made a discovery. At their meetings they hear the testimonies of men and women who have been delivered from diseases of long-standing, from defects of character, and from deep-lying sins. All this seems to be and *is* very new to them. If they have indeed heard it before, they never heard it in the same way before, or never took the hearing of it seriously. By laying emphasis on a subordinate aspect of Christianity they form a new religion of it. The pulpits of the Christian Churches had for years fallen out of the way of systematic teaching concerning the nature of the soul, avoiding what the Roman Catholic Church calls Direction—*i.e.* specific guidance in the details of the spiritual life. There are difficulties of course in handling mental and spiritual hygiene in the pulpit. But these people require help, and in their need of it are going elsewhere. Captured by a great desire to understand the working of their own souls, and how they can overcome disease and temptation, and how they can live a truly spiritual human life, believing moreover the promises made to them, that they can be taught these things in this place or that, they are being led away from the Christian faith.

The mind has power over the body, and it is “power” which men desire—power to master disease and desire and will both within their own lives and the lives of others. It is very interesting to know how Nietzsche, the fountain-head of all this

movement, came to believe in "the will to power." He had been, when a student at a German University and a Professor in Switzerland, fascinated by the teaching of Schopenhauer, who was a Pessimist, and taught that suffering was at the very heart of life, and that morality consisted in sympathy for those who suffered. As a naturalised Swiss, Nietzsche could not enlist in the Franco-German war, but gave himself whole-heartedly to the care of the wounded. Dr. Figgis, in *The Will to Freedom*, writes:

"Busied with the sick, driven nearly wild with sympathy, he caught sight of a troop of Prussian horse coming thundering down a hill into the village. Their splendour of aspect, strong, courageous, and efficient, at once impressed him. He saw that suffering and sympathy with it were not, as he had thought *à la* Schopenhauer, the profoundest things in life. It was this power, greater than pain, which made pain irrelevant—that was the reality. Life began to present itself as a struggle for power. This is his first move away from Schopenhauer and Pessimism."

Thousands of quiet men and women of our day have been impressed by a similar sight, the splendour and might of it, and have felt rising within them an admiration for something that was new to them, viz. might, force, power, and an outgoing of their will towards it.

Nevertheless we must ask what the nature of that "power" was which converted Nietzsche, making pain irrelevant and revealing itself as the ultimate reality of life. This is no trivial question. In the troop of Prussian horse there were clearly two factors that combined to produce the deep impres-

sion upon Nietzsche's mind. There was first the perception of what we call the "physical force" of the horses and the men, the conception of what the impact of such a troop would be upon a troop of the enemy. But next, and surely much more important, was the feeling of the discipline of the men, the management of this living energy by *men* of disciplined thought and purpose and courage in them. There, in their discipline, he saw energy that was unreasoning brought into unity, and directed in the whole mass of it to a patriotic end which as a German he counted sacred. This visible energy still imposes itself upon the spectators of battalions of soldiers, and possibly makes them wish (if they are religious men) for the day when it may be used, not for the slaughter of men, but for the furthering of Christ's kingdom.

Now this power or physical force, as we call it in ordinary speech, this energy as scientific men call it, is a fixed quantity in the Universe. According to the well-known law of the Conservation of Energy it can neither be increased nor destroyed. It can be transformed from one kind to another, but we cannot add to its sum, nor can we diminish it, and of that energy we have each a small share. That share we can use, for a good end or a bad. We can waste this, our substance, in riotous living, or bring in, by means of it, usury for the honour of our Master. We can employ the energy of "things," or persuade our fellowmen to help with their energy for our ends.

But there is another form of energy at our disposal which may be increased indefinitely. Scripture is everywhere dealing with it, and the great figures

portrayed there are illustrations of its beneficent use. There was a "power" bestowed upon them, which they recognised as divine. Our Lord promised it to His disciples before He left them; they were to wait in Jerusalem, He said, until they were "clothed with power from on high." One might quote many passages to the same effect. But far more striking than any number of passages is the character of the men who believed on Him, and the amazing change that took place in them through their belief. They were evidently under the influence of some great power. What this power was we can best observe from their activities. They poured their strength, the energy of body and soul, into beneficent channels. They did not use it for the mastering of men, but consecrated it to the lowliest service of them. The reality of life, according to them, lay neither in suffering nor in a force that made suffering irrelevant, but in the inward dedication of all their sufferings and all their forces to the spiritual purposes of God. They got no new gift or endowment of a physical kind. The power a man has of lifting a heavy weight is the same after his conversion as it was before it; the power he has of overcoming temptation is incalculably greater. He brings forth the fruit of the Spirit—that is the power. By it he is able to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. It comes to disciples not in violence, but in prayer, in the surrender of themselves to the will of the Father, in every act of the will's concentration upon serving Him. So great is this power and so little relied on, that we are surprised at the marvels it works in breaking up

men's evil habits, and elevating them into a new and serene life.

Very naturally the power is spoken of in vivid figures of speech, and we will appreciate the common figure of warfare. It is called a fight, a struggle: "Fight the good fight of faith"; "Put on the whole armour of God"; "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood"; "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." In these sentences we seem to see, contending with one another for the mastery, two men, of whom the Christian is one fighting for God, and the other driving him to sin—who? As we have seen, the contest is entirely within a man's own soul, and he is himself both of the combatants. He is fighting himself. He is tempted to turn away from God, but the whole power which the temptation exercises upon him is his own power, and the power with which he resists it is his own power. This is true, no matter where it comes from. It must be transformed into ours before it can act upon us. If it comes in the form of encouragement or advice, we must appropriate it before it can tell on our contest. Unless we see it to be a desirable thing, approve of it, choose it, employ it, the "fight" would not be a spiritual one, nor would the victory (if we won it) help to build up a spiritual character. From this it will be evident that God cannot bestow graces upon us as if they were sums of money. They must both be betowed by God and achieved by men. They are gifts from God, and at the same moment attainments of men. We are not only drawn away, but also drawn heavenward by our own desires.

The grace of God is God—God working in the

soul. And He works in every soul that is willing to receive Him. That is "the Power," the strength of the believer. The paradox of the Christian religion is that this "strength is made perfect in weakness." In the "fight" for one's soul, in the alternating of the desire of evil with the desire of good, in the swaying to and fro of the heart from one motive to another—in this "fight" *the secret of success is in the fixing of the attention on God*. As we fix our thought on Him, He gains upon the soul. If we continue to seek Him, to wait upon Him, to lay open our soul to His influence, He takes a larger and larger place in our consciousness until He fills it completely. As we do this, the temptation falls away, withers and dies. To be weak is miserable, if the doing or suffering depends on our own strength. On the other hand, to be weak is strength made perfect, if it leads us to turn in our helplessness to the Almighty. His strength, like an atmosphere, wraps us round and permeates our whole spiritual life. By a thought, by fixing the heart on Him, we are lifted out of the struggle, and find refuge and peace in His presence. To be weak, to know it and to place ourselves at His disposal—that is strength. Then there will be no moral difficulty which we may not master, no perplexity which we may not solve, no sin we cannot overcome, no grace we may not attain. "Not by might or power, but by My Spirit." There need be no struggle, no long and wearing fight with an old sin or a strong temptation. Christ within us does the fight; for Christ is the Power of God, and is at our disposal.

CHAPTER XXI

A Religion of the Will

THERE is no grander sight in the world than the rising of a man or a body of men in their weakness, and asserting their liberty and manhood against what is oppression in its strength. And if the rebellion of the man be against his own past, and the breaking away be of chains which he himself has forged and bound about his soul, it must bring joy to the angels in heaven. To rouse men, so that they shall assert themselves against themselves, is their salvation. All divine aid is promised them in the struggle. We need not wonder, then, at our Lord or His apostles appealing to this power which is inherent in the nature of man. It was said of one who answered this appeal: "He turned against himself, and in an instant rose to greatness."

From time to time in his epistles, we find St. Paul referring to the Roman soldiery as examples of what Christians should be. In the streets of Eastern cities he was impressed, as we have been in our day, by the discipline and power of an army. It suggested to him irresistible might and victory. His was the spirit of a true soldier, and the thought of the prowess of a veteran called up the thought of soldiers of Jesus Christ, disciplined and marching to the overthrow of all powers that held down in sin's oppression the souls of men.

What is needed for the world's salvation is something that arrests the attention, that renews and fixes the will. Thus we have religions that make the will the centre of all. And they are of a noble lineage. The words by which they work upon us are among the worthiest of human speech, such as law, obedience, duty, righteousness, justice, order. The words by which they mark the evils against which they wage their war are disorder, rebellion, anarchy, injustice, oppression. Such Churches have a great calling. The religion of the will most familiar to Christians is that of the Jews, with its emphasis on the Law, on commandments and ordinances. It had divine sanction, and, in their eyes, God was the Lawgiver and the Judge. The best defence a Jew could make of himself was: All these commandments have I kept from my youth; or, In the eyes of the Law I was blameless. And a most impressive sight it was to see great communities of men disciplined in right living, even to have as an ideal this blamelessness constantly summoning them to the allegiance of a righteous God. We know what a spectacle it was in that corrupt world to have a nation separated off by a high moral ambition. It had this set before it as a goal, that it curb and subdue and train this wilful, wayward spirit of man, hold in leash his unruly passions, and bring into obedience to God all the rebel instincts and impulses of a race just emerging from the worship of anything and everything that was natural.

There was in it much of what we should now describe as a military ideal, the regimenting of men, so that they should march and keep step together in

the way of right-doing. The end and aim of the Jewish religion, as the "lawyers" conceived it, was not that a man should come to *obey himself*, or follow a law of his own best choosing, but that he submit himself to a law laid down for him, explained and applied by authority, and extended by enactments or traditions into all the details of life. There is no man who has ever had the directing of another's life who has not known the desire to bring him into some such obedience as this. By instinct we issue orders. At first it seems the only way by which we can save men from evil, and from themselves. If we can quote God in our support, we are so much the more powerful. In the name of the King, we believe, we can now lay down the law and demand obedience. The man or the nation has nothing to do with it except to take orders from above and obey at once. Their thoughts and aspirations are irrelevant. "Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die." Make the law, thought out and enacted by those who *can* think, your will. To many thoughtful men this must always appear an attractive course to follow with the young, the uneducated, and the undisciplined mob. It is simple, easy to comprehend, direct; and it is sure in its aim.

Now the place which the will holds in our relationship to God is vital. The place it holds in conduct (if we may separate the two) is no less vital. We have been taught to believe in it, and modern civilisation has driven us to believe in it supremely. "The will to power" is one of the popular phrases of our day. We lay stress on energy, activity, the

strenuous life, persistence, unbreakable determination. The man who is esteemed is the man who will not accept defeat. We freely give our admiration to dogged resolution. Nor can there be any doubt about the marvellous achievements of those who have refused to admit defeat. Think for a moment of the manifold endeavours to reach the North Pole, to discover the secret causes of disease, to master the air, or again of what went to the discovery of wireless telegraphy, of radium, of photographing and numbering the "hosts of heaven." There is not a department of life in which we cannot see the slow but certain mastery of nature by determination. What an extraordinary power this is which has been bestowed upon us. We see some end which we believe to be good; we desire it; we fix our mind upon it; we aim at it, saying to ourselves: It must be done! And it is done. Strong desires and aims tend to realise themselves. Something large enough yet not too large, something difficult and at the same time vitally important, is presented to our minds with urgency of appeal, and the fighting spirit within us is roused: our whole nature is braced and strengthened, the reserves of power in our deeper being are summoned, and we work "miracles," we accomplish the impossible. Some one asked Rubenstein to go with him to church. "I will," was his answer, "if you will take me to a preacher who will tell me to do the impossible." And that is precisely what every preacher does who knows how to rouse the will and turn it upon the spiritual life. In the early days of the war, an officer described how he brought ammunition to the firing line one night. The barrage of

the enemy was terrific. "It was rumoured that the battery with the gunners had already been taken. All the wires were destroyed. One lieutenant came up. 'Are you still there?' he was asked. 'Yes, but we have no ammunition.' 'Then go and fetch some.' Down to the depôt, and back with four cars loaded. The road was closed by a curtain of fire—shell after shell—one would believe that it was hardly possible to come through. *But it must be, and therefore it succeeds. The will has done it.* But it is a miracle that one comes safely over." When these drivers thought of the danger, they felt it *could not* be done. When they thought of their comrades, they knew it *must* be done. They urged on their horses, and it *was* done. The will had done it!

We no sooner grasp the meaning and the worth of this than we begin to loathe the slackers, and wish that we could bring them under the discipline of men of wisdom and a strong will. The hanging about street corners and the doors of public-houses, the idling and loafing, and letting wives and children sink or swim, this it is which makes one wroth. The slacker is not only idle and useless to the community, he is also a centre of corruption, rotting in the soul of him, and causing debasement to his fellows. The man of resolute purpose contrasts him with the healthy and disciplined man, prompt and alert, quick to discern the needs of others, and quick to act. You see him erect in bearing, waiting and ready for the word or sign of command, without wavering or hesitation in the fulfilment of it. Who does not think it worth the acquiring for oneself, worth the communicating to others? Thus men come to believe

in the power of the will. When men of ability have done so much by means of it, may they not do more? Is there anything entirely beyond its reach?

There is manifestly another world in which man lives, and which is beyond the reach of the will. Let us begin by considering the world of affection. Our tendency to turn away from everything that lends itself to sentiment shuts out from our view the half of life, and all the beauty and charm that lie hidden there. We do not, any of us, believe that our homes are the creation of the *will*. What is kindness but the setting aside as useless of any form of compulsion or strain? Although kindness may be persevering and unwearied, persistence is no part of it. Love, gentleness, and peace, which are the very atmosphere of home, come from another source than will, and, instead of being the products of it, are themselves its creators. As we know, the feelings are the origin of the desires, and the desires the origin of our acts of will. Thoughts or impressions, feelings, desires, deeds—that is the history of all we do. The will is the final step, and cannot move alone.

Let us turn over another page of this book of the human heart, and read what is written of tribulation and sorrow. Of course, a man may by will refuse to consider them, or let them trouble him in his work or his amusements. He may defy fate and curse God. Would not the loss he thereby entails upon himself be greater than all that he could possibly attain by sheer power of brain? If such a mind as his should spread through a community or nation, if such a degree of civilisation as would embrace the

highest advance in wealth and science should become universal, and with it the exclusion of compassion, love, mercy, and the other graces, would not the earth be hell? The loss would be the loss of that which lifts us above savagery; it would be the return of hardness and cruelty. On the other hand, if, instead of rejecting tribulation or sorrow, we accept them (as, of course, we must), and submit our spirits to their meaning, then at once we rise into another world. Assuredly there is nothing finer, more beautiful in human character than what is called a chastened spirit, and yet that comes not by the will of man. Ah! the proudest mind is humbled at last. The bravest swimmer in life's sea sinks; the most skilful and most defiant wrestler with the unseen antagonist is finally thrown; slowly and inevitably we are all worn out. And if we have gained nothing from the journey or the combat of our earthly existence but what the will can grasp, we shall be as naked in character as when we drew our first breath. Effort in the world of which we are now speaking is mere defeat. The only possible victory is in submission, in self-surrender, and the acknowledgment of our need of other help.

In the life of our Lord we get the finest illustration of this truth. In the wilderness it would seem He had to settle this very question. When the devil took Him to the top of an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—in other words, when the thought of the conquest of the whole world for His heavenly Father presented itself to His mind, and the question arose, "How can it be done?" He had

to make His choice between *imposing His will* upon men, or winning their wills through the manifestation of self-sacrificing love. There was the devil's way of force, and the Father's way of the cross and of love; and all the kingdoms of the world without antagonism or suffering were the bribe. Our Lord chose the long, slow, agonising path of the cross. There was for Him, and there is for us, no other path, if He and we would reach spiritual results. The will may conquer the world; it cannot conquer the heart, or the will itself.

Some of the most precious attainments of life are reached only by ceasing to strive. It is the central truth of Wordsworth's creed, for he was a teacher as well as a great poet, and he had a creed by which he lived. "Weak is the will of man, his judgment blind," he begins one of his sonnets in which he speaks of

"the glorious faculty assigned
To elevate the more-than-reasoning Mind,
And colour life's dark cloud with orient rays.
Imagination is that sacred power,
Imagination lofty and refined;
'Tis hers to pluck the amaranthine flower
Of Faith, and round the sufferer's temples bind
Wreaths that endure affliction's heaviest shower,
And do not shrink from sorrow's keenest wind."

It is a great claim to make, and yet it is the same claim which the New Testament makes. The poet preaches his creed as unweariedly as St. Paul: it is not by effort or violence, not by the will of man is he saved, but by a gift freely bestowed on all who, ceas-

ing to strive, commit themselves to One who is above them yet within them, and has the power of saving. There is something that comes to men when they are worn out by their own endeavours; and the something is called Eternal Life. What we need is not more will-power, but more receptivity of heart. It is the open mind, the mind which waits and accepts, that is lifted into this new world. We cannot *achieve* salvation, cannot earn it, cannot deserve it; we receive it. All too cheap! answers the world; what we must have is the Will-to-power. No, replies that mind which lies deeper than will—no, we must have a Will-to-surrender. Our wills are ours to make them God's. This is the meaning of the bewildering discipline of life, the tossing and heaving, the struggling to keep one's feet and the stumbling and falling, the disappointments and thwartings, the wearing anxieties and agonising sorrows—we mean those experiences which are not due to anything we ourselves have done, yet have come to our door, because we are sharers of this common life of man—these are prepared for us so that they may change our wills and turn them to God in our helplessness. It is a strange doctrine, yet it succeeds.

Nevertheless, we must not misunderstand it. The will remains, as strong and necessary as ever, although now it "locks itself" on the will of God and on all that is godlike. If the man of strong will loathes the sight of the slacker, still more does he who has been enrolled among the labourers of Christ. We can imagine what St. Paul would have made of him, for to the apostle life had no other significance than service. What contempt he would have shown

for those men, pagan or Christian, who would slide or dawdle through life, drifting like a rudderless boat, or flitting aimlessly from one enjoyment to another, from this trifling engagement to that, until first the will and then the health collapsed through doing nothing that was hard or strenuous. In a very real sense, our manhood is saved by our having a purpose in life, either forced upon us, or deliberately chosen. Indeed, some men would say (and there is truth in it) that a bad purpose pursued with determination is not so destructive of the soul as living a harmless life that is aimless and useless, that does not have force enough to commit the sins it broods upon. This is stated strongly in Browning's well-known lines:—

“The sin I charge ’gainst each frustrate ghost
Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin
Though the end in view be a sin, I say.”

This is only partially true, for the sin committed has a wider range of evil results than the sin merely meditated. Still, the will, the power of resolving and acting, is more surely undermined by the constant idle dreaming over an evil which we have not courage to commit.

A great purpose gives both unity and a touch of greatness to those who take it up. Even to busy oneself with great books is to live in the atmosphere of noble thinking, and that is much. Every life has to be spent to a considerable degree in the trifling details of its daily round, and the tendency is to be lost in them. Yet these little things may minister to

greatness by our using them for a great purpose, which perhaps may be nothing more than attaining patience. The danger does not attach to the details, for the greatest of purposes, say a great campaign, depends upon the closest attention to a multitude of them. The details in such a case are welded into a unity by a purpose. And we, who are ourselves but details in God's vast purpose, attain to a measure of His greatness by taking part in it. For the time we become the comrades of Jesus Christ. St Paul would seem to go further, and to identify himself in some way with the inmost experiences of his Saviour. Having put away from him, by an act of will, his ambition and all that the world could give him, he sets his mind upon "*knowing* Christ," in a deeper sense than understanding Him, and proceeds step by step until he seeks to be conformed to His death and attain to His resurrection from the dead. If we may take it for granted that a man's highest achievement is himself, it is clear, as St. Paul here shows us, he cannot attain it by drifting or idling; he can attain it only by the most strenuous and persistent application of his time and energy. To get possession of one's soul is the first law of the moral and the religious life. Then we must train and prune it as a gardener would a vine. Its life-forces must be directed by thought, and conserved, if need be, by severity. Those subtle, silent, unsuspected forces which lie hidden within us all, and leap out sometimes to our surprise or even to our undoing, must be united and knit together for the making our own of all that is noble and divine. The mighty power of God is at our disposal, and be-

comes ours by faith, by openness and receptivity. And our spirit we have to concentrate on the likeness of Christ.

The divine life is a gift, yet no spiritual gift is ours except on the condition of employing it continually and resolutely. Our danger is like that of a vessel which in a storm hugs the lee-shore. We find it hard to forsake our temptations and make for Christ. A terrific storm broke on one of the great natural harbours of the Pacific, where man-of-war ships and merchant vessels of many nations were riding at anchor. The cyclone tossed and tumbled them about like paper boats, drove them against one another, and flung some of them high on the shore. An iron-clad of our own navy was among them. The captain, knowing the danger well, put on full steam, faced the storm, and made for the open sea. As he passed the other ships, with his engines panting and throbbing, their crews burst into a loud cheer upon cheer. In our temptations and difficulties let us make for the wide open sea of God's love. For this we need nothing but a humble spirit and a firm will. Decide for Christ, and Eternal Life is yours.

CHAPTER XXII

Concentration of the Soul on God

WE have referred to this "Concentration of the Soul" from time to time in the preceding chapters, and now turn to it for fuller consideration. The thought involves two things: viz., the Object on which we concentrate our attention, and the mental act of concentrating on the Object. In religion the Object is God, or some aspect of His life and work. At present, however, our purpose is not to deal with the nature of God, the great end and object of a Christian's endeavour, but with the mental act of fixing our heart on Him, its methods, difficulties, and results.

As is well known, there are two ways in which the attention is arrested and fixed. The object which we attend to may be presented so strongly and vividly that the mind is at once turned from everything else and carried away. It cannot help attending. An alarm of fire, a very loud noise, a cry in the night-time, or an interesting story will do it. A paragraph in a newspaper may be able to fill the mind with thoughts that will haunt us for days. An act of heroic daring will arouse our admiration, a disaster to our army will disturb us with serious alarm. In cases of this kind we have taken no deliberate part ourselves. The deed was done, the

tale was told, and we were practically helpless and must think of them. We were captives, held by a power other than our own. Our attention was involuntary. Some writers, some speakers or preachers, have this gift of arresting and holding the mind, and those who read their works or listen to their words cannot help attending.

On the other hand, attention may arise in this way. We know that we *ought* to give our mind to a subject, a task or duty, which is not attractive in itself to any one, and is to us at the moment unpleasant. But it ought to be done, and we *will* to do it. We choose to do it now; we deliberately turn to it, and away from what is more interesting. We put from us the thought of what is pleasant and (as it were) "lock" our attention on our duty. It is plain that there are two sides to this second act of ours, the side on which we *exclude* from our mind the object which attracts us, and the side on which we *set our mind* on the object of our choice. In ordinary speech we use them interchangeably. On closer examination, however, we shall find that they are not exactly the same, and that, for practical purposes, they are very different. We cannot turn the mind away from what is attractive and fix it upon nothing. Indeed, we cannot turn it at all unless we turn it *to* an object. It is futile to ask a man to cease thinking of what fascinates him and holds his attention, without putting before him in an attractive way something else to think of. A merely negative command is at the best a weak command. Even if we should succeed in driving out the evil spirit, we leave the attention vacant for seven other evil spirits

to enter into possession. The true way of saving a man, as St. Paul might have put it, is not by lecturing him on what the law forbids, but by revealing to him the beauty and power and peace of what Christ reveals.

We are speaking now of the concentration of the mind or the attention on God. It is necessary that we concentrate our mind on Him; and this may be done in one or other of the ways we have mentioned. God may be so presented to us that we surrender our whole being to Him at once. This is what some writers and speakers aim at: it is the purpose and meaning of evangelistic or revival services. Or we may also of our own free choice, quietly and thoughtfully, give our time to cultivate the presence and love of God. Our danger in the spiritual life lies in the incessant appeals which are made upon our attentions by the outer world. Temptations to do specific acts of evil are but a small part of it; our temptations take the form rather of keeping the mind busily occupied with matters in themselves worthy, necessary, even important—our homes, our work, the nation, or perhaps the affairs of the Church. These tend to wear down an early enthusiasm for Christ, or a strong resolution which we may have made to concentrate on God. They *must* be done, and the matters which must be done increase in number, until the whole day is filled up. In the spiritual life the first necessity, then, is time. We must carve out of the day's engagements a certain period, longer or shorter, which will be devoted to the nurture of the inner life. This becomes an enclosed space, a kind of cloister or cell, where we are alone; and this

solitude we can create anywhere, even in the crowded streets of a great city. To make sure of it, men go into "retreat," and in some cases groups of them assemble, and under strict rule continue together without exchanging words for a fortnight or more. In other cases, men will withdraw in the middle of the business day from every call, and spend half an hour in meditation and prayer. One group, consisting of men who are conducting operations of the most extensive kind in America, have engaged with one another to do this, no matter what business call may be made on them—and to meet once a week in each other's houses for consultation on their religious life. With other men, according to their nature or their circumstances, the compact will be a personal one, and more flexible. But with all of us, the necessity remains that to the affairs of God time must be given.

There is a spiritual exercise, which is dealt with in works of devotion, called meditation. It consists in the application of the whole mind to some passage of Scripture, some doctrine or grace, some saintly life or religious history. We might say that meditation is a method of reading. As all readers know, reading may be a very lazy act of the mind, involving no serious attention at all, or attention only by fits and starts. On the other hand, we may read with a definite purpose, our whole mind alive and bent on the understanding and mastering of the subject, on getting at *the author's thought*. This is not altogether a common characteristic of devotional reading, and yet it is indispensable, if we are to live the spiritual life of our Lord and His

apostles. The question at this point is not at all what use we can make of these words of Scripture for our own or other men's edification, but what they really mean, and were intended to convey. Having discovered the truth, we make an application of it to our own and others' needs. There will be no necessity for fantastic vagaries, the spiritualising and allegorising of details in a narrative, or of prepositions and conjunctions in a clause—none of which could ever have been in the writer's mind. By such a process as this, the inspiration of the Bible is entirely circumvented. Yet the truths of the Bible are so rich and manifold that we shall find treasures beyond all our fancies if we take time to study and reflect. Now, this studying, and reflecting, and applying constitute meditation.

In meditation on a passage, we try to realise as clearly as we can the circumstances of the writer, or of the person he describes. With the knowledge we have acquired, we figure to ourselves the place or the object or the person; we live through the narrative in our imagination, and enter into the feelings of the people who appear in it. In this way we are only trying to produce an impression upon our minds such as we should have received had we been present and witnessed what then took place. There is no mental strain in this exercise, and no waste of time. During the moments when we are thus engaged, our spirit is continually busy with itself. Prayer comes naturally. We are humbled, penitent, thankful for the mercy of God; we reach out to a better life, receive courage, make resolutions, commit ourselves in simplicity to His care.

There are many people who find that the reading of a biography of some really religious man or woman helps them more than anything else to attain this devout mind. Anything indeed is good that leads us to deal directly with God in prayer, although in the experience of the ages nothing has been found to approach the Holy Scriptures in their power of bringing the soul into the presence of the Eternal.

The purpose of our meditation is mainly, if not entirely, the purifying of our conscience, the moving of our hearts, and the directing of our wills towards Christ.

“As a man makes progress in meditating, the passages of Scripture which he reads will become shorter, and the work of his soul upon them will become longer. At last only a few verses, or a few words, will be needed to form the foundation on which the meditation of his heart will be built.”

The difficulty which many feel is to keep the attention fixed on such a theme for any length of time; it turns away, in spite of our best intentions, to something new. And the truth is that the attention cannot be fixed on any subject, unless we find the “something new” which it seeks within the subject itself. As Professor James says, the secret “of sustained attention to a given topic of thought is that we should roll it over and over incessantly, and consider different aspects and relations of it in turn.”

There is another attitude which the soul may take in its approach to God, that of Contemplation. Meditation is the devotional study of some passage

of Scripture, of the life of our Lord, or, it may be, some doctrine or Christian grace, or the life of one of His servants. Contemplation differs from it in this, that it enters into what may perhaps be called a closer relation to God. It is the attitude of the soul to God as He is in Himself. One writer describes the difference in this way:

“Meditation is detachment from the things of the world in order to attend to the things of God; contemplation is detachment from the things of God in order to attend to God. *Waiting upon God*, with loving attention, humble resignation, and absolute self-surrender, is the note of contemplation. This is the highest point of concentration; it is the concentration of the whole being in quiet, silent attention upon God, in listening for any indication of His will, together with any reproof or exhortation from Him to our conscience. We are in His presence; we adore Him with silent reverence, and are ready to obey His voice.”

It will be seen from these words that the difference is not one of contrast, but one of degree. Meditation in any sincere heart rises from time to time into contemplation, and contemplation has its roots in meditation. Contemplation lives and moves in the sense of the indwelling presence of God. It aims at seeing Him, gazing on Him, not as if He were an image, or as if He must appear in vision in some form which we may describe to another, “We shall see Him *as He is*.” And the chosen disciples did see Him in Jesus Christ—“He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” And they did, when, for a moment at a time, they saw past the earthly frame of His person and His work to the Divinity always present in Him and in all He did. They

saw Him by an act of contemplation. Contemplation is the same *kind* of sight as the attitude of a poet's soul to nature. The difference is in the object, which makes the difference vast indeed. Just as God transcends His works, so does the effect of the contemplation of God on the soul transcend that of the contemplation of nature. It deepens and purifies our whole spiritual being, driving back, or rather annihilating, temptation, detecting faults which were before unknown and unsuspected. It makes no direct assault on sin, because it rises above sin, and this will continue as long as we continue in the attitude of contemplation.

For this exercise of the spirit, quiet is necessary. "Solitude is my great ordinance," said Richard Cecil. It would seem that our Lord Himself required it; and if He did, who can dispense with it? The ripest thinking of the finest minds can be achieved only in the hours of solitude, for the simple reason that such thinking springs, not from the understanding or the direct activities of the mind, but from the welling up of the mind's whole experience. In our best moments we are neither acquiring knowledge nor purposely exercising our minds upon problems; we are rather listening to what our deeper, wiser self is telling us. The flashes of inspiration that come to men, the sudden insight into deep things which have long baffled them, the leap of the soul into light or fine action, are the results of brooding thought, or times of sadness, or the silent wonder at the thwartings of their life in God's Providence. And this richer knowledge of the soul it never uses, unless after a time of silence and soli-

tude. Living as we do in a time of the intensest activity, when it would appear to be almost a crime against the human race to spend our days in reflection, we must remind ourselves that some one's reflection lies at the source of all activity which is worth the while, and that the more active a generation is, the more needful is it to draw from the deepest wells. The religious life of such a time demands that it be nourished and fed, not on the chance thinking of a crowded day, but on the strongest and most massive truths of Christ, the Revelation of the Father. Out of our silent contemplation of God will arise the truth and the strength we need. Miss Caroline E. Stephen, writing on this subject in *Light Arising*, says:—

“The inward silence and stillness for the sake of which we value and practise outward silence, is a very different thing from vacancy. It is rather *the quiescence of a perfectly ordered fulness*—a leaving behind of hurrying outward thoughts, and an entering into the region of central calm. And let us remember that it is a condition to be resolutely sought for, not a merely passive state into which we may lapse at will. In seeking to be still, the first step of necessity is to exclude all disturbance and commotion from without; but this is not all, there are inward disturbances and commotions to be subdued with a strong hand. There is a natural impulse to fly from the presence of God to a multitude of distractions, which we must resolutely control if we would taste the blessedness of conscious nearness to Him. I believe it often is the case that the way to achieve this resolute self-control is through thought—through a deliberate act of attention to our own highest conceptions of the nature and will of Him with

whom we have to do. It may be that to achieve it requires a struggle of the will—a struggle not only for steady attention, but for submission. Many and sore conflicts may have to be passed through before we can be gathered into that peace of God which awaits the humble and contrite soul as it draws near to Him. . . . Words may help and silence may help, but the one thing needful is that the heart should turn to its Maker as the needle turns to the pole. For this we must be still.”

EPILOGUE

The Lure of Life

IT was a brilliant summer Sunday morning in Lucerne, and the sunshine was flooding the town and flashing from the lake like silver. The mountains in the immediate neighbourhood were clear, and far away the snow shone on the summits of the Bernese Oberland. As we made our way to the English service, we took shelter from the sun's rays by walking under the shade of the trees that protect the Promenade along the lakeside: the subdued light of the church and its stillness were very welcome. The text of the sermon that morning was: "I am persuaded that *life* shall not be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is one of the merits of a good sermon that it so treats the text that it sets the mind working. All that day these arresting words were with us—as we climbed the brow of the hill, as we looked from our window on the entrancing landscape, as we walked the streets to the evening service, as we watched the lake in the gathering darkness, and listened to the songs of the young people rowing out on its waters or home again, as we wondered at the beauty of earth and sky. And this was the refrain of our thought: Even this life, stretching out before our eyes with all its loveliness,

shall not be able to separate us from the love of God.

There is, of course, a danger that life may be so absorbing as to separate us; indeed, if we are ever separated, it is always some aspect of life that does it. In speaking to Christian men, it would be true to say that when they are separated from God at any time, the cause is not so much any conscious acts of sin as the manifold and engrossing interests of the day. The day, in a time like ours, is crowded with engagements great or small, which are in no way offensive to God or man, and yet at the same time have no relation to God, have no thought of God in them. How amazing it is that the very gifts of a heavenly Father should be the means of hiding His face from us! Yet so it is. Our minds are caught by the charm of life, and our affections are carried away by what is blameless and delightful in it, until we have hardly a moment to read God's word or speak to Him as a Friend. Very possibly something of this kind was in the apostle's mind when he set life among the powers that might separate men from the love of God. Along that line our thoughts ran for a time, awakening gratitude that not even the fascinations of earth and a happy earthly existence would finally overcome the persuasiveness of God's love.

Then came another thought. Life, and the interests of life, are the only sphere in which we can *find* God. Where else is it possible for us to seek Him? It is true that our work *must* be done. We should not live our fullest life if we shut off our interest in our homes, our friends, our books, in the well-being of our erring fellowmen and of our nation.

If we cannot find God there, we shall be able to find Him nowhere. But there indeed He is, and to those who know His love, He shines out there. Rothe says that we have not seen into the nature of things until we have seen through them to God. The heart which has had true fellowship with Him acquires the power of detecting Him everywhere. Life does not come between us and God, it reveals Him.

For this reason, then, we can speak of the Lure of Life, not in the sense that it draws us away from God, but that it draws us to Him. How many the gifts of our human nature are that are merely the beginnings of a life which is perfected in the Eternal—our reason, our moral nature, our home affections. Life, when lived at its best, is the school of heaven. From birth we are started at the very gates of God's Temple, in the love of parents to whom we are more than life itself. The training deepens as we grow in years. Slowly we begin to understand its meaning, feeling within us the growth and predominance of the spirit, and the gradual decline of the outward form. Then what St. Paul calls "the earthly tabernacle" falls away, and we step forth spiritual men. We have been lured into the very presence of the Eternal.

Life, instead of separating us from the love of God, has bound us inseparably to Him. We cannot conceive of anything that would separate us from our sons and daughters, from thinking of them and loving them—not travel or scenery or work or books. If for a little we must give our whole attention to what we have in hand, yet when it is finished, back the mind goes again to what is dearest.

These things, even at their strongest, will only make us think the more of home. "I will bring my boy to see this," the father says; "I must take this home"; "I wish now to go home and tell my children what I have seen." Our affections are the golden thread on which the whole world, like a thousand pearls, is strung. So is it with God. When our hearts have been won, everything speaks of Him. When the enlightened soul looks up into the heavens, when the sunshine or the rain falls on the fields, when the birds come or the flowers, he knows he is in the presence of God, who has made sure that life shall not be able to separate us from His love by making it the very means by which His love enters and floods our hearts.

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